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ABSTRACT

This book explains how individuals can contract their way to jobs or careers in the 21st century workplace. The following are among the topics discussed: (1) how the workplace has changed (looking for work instead of a job; hidden employment opportunities; reasons contracting makes sense; making it easier to get hired; the need for self-promotion); (2) identifying one's marketable qualifications and attributes (identifying things of personal importance and relevance; defining personal and career profiles; succeeding as a contractor; staying flexible); (3) self-marketing (myths about selling; marketing tools; resumes and marketing materials; the 21st century resume; getting organized; networking do's and don'ts; looking for work on the Internet); and (4) the first 90 days of the contracting process (steps to take before attempting to market oneself; identifying companies to contact and making the initial contact; fine-tuning one's approach). Appendix 1 outlines a process for individuals to use to become career fit, transform themselves into a business, and sell that business. Appendix 2 examines the following topics related to the new workplace: objectives and features of the entrepreneurship program at the University of Victoria in British Columbia; the Internet and the law; telecommuting; the truth behind fuzzy employment statistics; strategies for filling information technology jobs; and trends. (MN)

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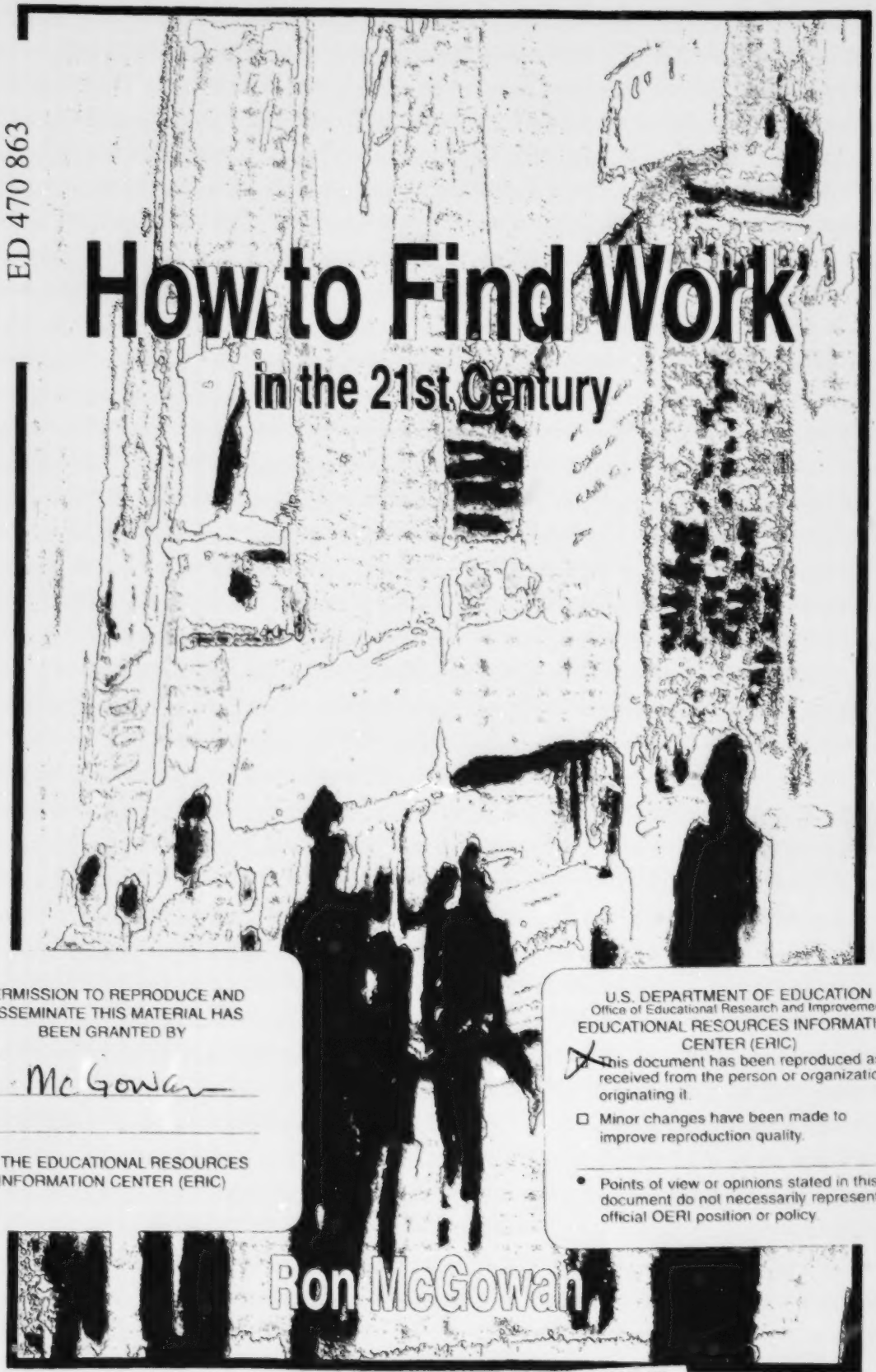

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How to Find Work in the 21st Century

Contracting Your Way to a Job or a Career

By Ron McGowan

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For Jennifer

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Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness, concerning all acts of initiative and creation.

There is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that otherwise would never have occurred.

A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

Begin it now.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Introduction

The workplace at the beginning of the twenty-first century is dramatically different from what it has been for most of the twentieth century. In the twentieth century society took for granted that the way to earn a living, for the majority of people, was to get educated at a college or university or trade school and then use that education or training to land a job with a stable organization or company.

In the 1990s along came downsizing, re-engineering, the Internet and powerful, networked PCs on most peoples' desks—all of which have transformed the workplace from something that was fairly predictable for most of us into something that is confusing and uncomfortable. These transitions that are going on in the workplace today are causing some of the most significant changes to occur since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

There is a lot of work available today but that doesn't mean that there are a lot of jobs available—at least not the types of jobs that we've known for several generations. Today it makes more sense to look for work than to look for a job but for many, making that shift in their thinking is a huge challenge. Notwithstanding all of the turmoil that took place in the workplace in the 1990s and that continues today, our society still cherishes the traditional concept of a job, with all of the stabililty that we perceive comes with it.

Stable jobs still exist but they are getting harder to find and the route to getting one is different from what it used to be. For many, that route involves a detour through unfamiliar territory, i.e., operating as a contractor. The traditional route of university/college or trade school directly into a job is no longer guaranteed and the expectations that come with the job will be different from what they were in the past.

Some people thrive on earning a living as a contract worker while others are uncomfortable with the idea. Notwithstanding

the growth of small businesses and the numbers of self-employed people, the traditional concept of a job is still firmly ingrained in our psyche. Not all of the people who have taken the route to self-employment did so voluntarily and many would jump at the chance to land a stable job. Others focus exclusively on finding a job to replace the one they lost.

Many of the people who want to find a stable job fail to understand that in today's workplace, sometimes the most effective way to find a job is to be actively employed as a contractor. Companies regularly offer jobs to their contract workers before going to the market in the traditional hiring mode.

Many of the people who want to operate as contract workers have difficulty in knowing how to go about it. The intent of this book is to help those looking for a job and those who want to contract by educating them about the changes that have taken place in the workplace and showing them what they have to do to be successful as a contractor or how to use contracting as a way to find a stable job.

To achieve that objective, the book is broken down into the following sections:

Part One: How the Workplace has Changed

Before you can succeed in today's workplace, you have to understand how it works. It's not the same place that your parents or grandparents worked in and your approach to being successful in it will have to be different from theirs.

You have to understand the difference between looking for work and looking for a job. Unlike yesterday's workplace, you won't find work in your local newspaper unless you get lucky. Your approach has to be very focussed and you have to learn how to make it easy for employers to hire you. Finally, you have to become adept at self-promotion by being very clear on what you have to offer and how that benefits potential employers.

There are many misconceptions around the idea of contract work. One of the more ironic of these is that some of the people who want to find a stable job think that by taking on contract work, they will be cutting themselves off from finding that job when in fact, the opposite is true. Contracting offers flexibility and advantages to both the employer and the contractor and these will be explored.

You need to unload some of your historical notions about how to earn a living and broaden your understanding about what is going on in the workplace. Why is it that some people are constantly in demand while others with equally marketable skills are spinning their wheels?

Part Two: What Exactly do You Have to Offer?

Knowing yourself and what you have to offer potential employers takes on a whole new dimension in today's workplace. It's no longer enough to identify yourself as an accountant, graphic designer, librarian or whatever, you have to identify the specific skills that you have to offer and how those benefit the employer you want to work with.

For most people, before they move forward, they need to take a step backward and take some time to analyze and identify the things that are important to them in their lives and in their careers. Many people make the mistake of rushing from one job or contract to another before they have even defined the type of work that makes sense for them and the type of companies that they would enjoy working with.

This phase is critical if you want to succeed in the workplace of the twenty-first century but unfortunately it is one of the most neglected areas in defining effective career strategies. That's because it's not easy and it may be uncomfortable for you but it's the foundation on which every other aspect of being successful in today's workplace is built.

Part Three: How to Market Yourself

Today's workplace demands that you become adept at marketing yourself, otherwise you will miss out on work opportunities or be bypassed by less qualified people who are doing a better job of marketing themselves than you are. The myths around selling yourself will be dispelled and you will be given strategies and tools for selling yourself that will make the experience more effective and therefore more enjoyable and gratifying.

You know more about selling than you think you do and most people have false notions about how to successfully sell themselves. Many people are uncomfortable with this area and there are reasons for that which will be explored. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how effective you can be at selling yourself once you understand how the process works.

Part Four: Getting Started: The First 90 Days

Here you will be given a road map to get you up and running as a contractor and some strategies for increasing your chances of finding work. That road map will increase your effectiveness in finding work and reduce the frustration level that comes from an unfocussed approach. Finally, you will be given some techniques for increasing your mental and physical fitness.

A ship in port is safe,
but that is not what
ships are built for.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Part One:
How the Workplace has Changed

Looking for Work Instead of a Job

Is That all There Is?

We have lived with the modern concept of a job for so long that we tend to think that it has been around forever. In fact, it was introduced to the world about 150–200 years ago as nations began to industrialize. Before that, people earned a living by performing a variety of tasks, mostly in agriculture, in areas that were affected by the seasons, the weather and the time of day. When the concept of a job was introduced to society back then it caused just as much angst among our ancestors as it is causing now that it is in decline. It was seen as unpleasant, unnatural and an inhuman way to work. It's the ultimate irony. The job, that thing that our ancestors saw as abhorrent, is the thing that we've become addicted to.

We also tend to assume, because it is the way the majority of people have earned their living for generations, that a job is the only way to earn a living. In fact, a significant percentage of the workforce doesn't earn their living from traditional jobs. Take the construction industry for example. For people employed there, their job is tied directly to the project that they're currently building and when it is finished, so is their job and they have to look for another project. The same could be said for people employed in the arts. If, for example, you're an actor in a movie or a stage show, once the movie or show is over, so is your job and you move on to the next project. This is also true for musicians and other people employed in the arts.

So the idea of your job being tied to the project that you're currently working on is far from new. What's new is that more people who have always had a traditional job are finding that their livelihood is now going to be earned this way. What is disconcerting is that most of us come from a background where our parents and grandparents made their living from a traditional job which, for the most part, meant that their careers

were stable and they had some security. Most of us still long for that security but it's getting harder to come by.

The Rise of the Temporary or Contingent Worker

The twentieth century was the century of mass production and large corporations and the workplace was dominated by industrial giants like General Motors. At the end of the century, the biggest employer in the United States was Manpower, a company that specializes in temporary and contingent workers.

Another shift in the workplace that has resulted in a reduction in traditional jobs is the move towards outsourcing. Many companies that have traditionally had their own permanent workforce perform such tasks as producing payrolls, cleaning and maintaining their property, running the cafeteria and so on, have decided to lay off the employees in those areas and outsource these tasks to companies that specialize in them and who are more inclined to use temporary or contract workers.

In the manufacturing sector, one of the improvements that companies have made to make their process more efficient and economic is to employ a just-in-time approach to the inventory of parts that they carry. Instead of having large quantities of these parts sitting in inventory for long periods before they get used up, they have found a way to access those parts from their suppliers at the time that they are needed in the manufacturing process and have thus eliminated the need for costly inventories.

The same type of thing is happening in the workplace as companies increasingly view the work to be done in terms of projects and think of their staffing needs in terms of what they need for current and upcoming projects. The idea of a temp, or temporary worker, has been around for decades but it tended to be restricted to clerical and office staff like receptionists and data entry clerks. Now companies are hiring temporary workers

at all levels within the organization.

This is particularly true in the fastest growing sector in the economy of many countries, the Information Technology or IT sector. That industry is very project oriented and IT companies regularly hire people for projects with no expectation that their employment will become long-term. Even in Japan, the last bastion of the idea of lifetime employment, many companies where employees have traditionally expected to spend their entire careers with that company, are now moving towards hiring temporary workers.

A New Relationship

An employee with a company in yesterday's workplace could safely assume that included with their job were a variety of benefits and services that the employer would supply. Benefits ranged from dental plans to pension plans and you could often expect the employer to assume the responsibility for such things as mapping out a career plan for you.

Even your employability and expectation of being with the company on a long-term basis was a given once you had gone through the hiring process and had landed a full-time job. Today, having a full-time job is no guarantee that your future with the company is assured. Your security is tied to the value that the company perceives you to bring to their operation at any given time.

More companies are looking at employees as commodities, i.e., we will pay you for the set of skills that you bring to us but benefit packages, career planning, continuing education, upgrading of skills and those types of issues are viewed as costly overhead and the onus to provide for them has shifted from the company to the employee.

An exception to this trend can be found in the IT sector where, because of a severe shortage of highly skilled technical workers, some companies are resorting to all sorts of incentives

to hire these workers. Anything from signing bonuses and providing day care and elder care facilities, to valet services and gourmet, take home meals from the cafeteria are being offered. At the same time that the average worker is losing perks, these IT workers are demanding more of them.

As noted earlier however, the same industry is full of temporary workers, so within the same industry you have the highly skilled workers being courted and pampered while others are no better off than their counterparts in other industries. A recent example of this was a strike by janitorial workers in California's Silicon Valley where the primary issue was the low wages received by these workers.

The consensus among the experts on the workplace is that today everybody is a temporary worker and the only security you can expect to have is in having a set of current, marketable skills that are in demand.

The Shift to Smaller Companies

The workplace of the twentieth century, up until about the 1970s, was dominated by large companies. This changed in the 1980s and 90s to the point where, for years now, the vast majority of jobs and work opportunities are created by small businesses. Small today could mean a single operator who has expanded to the point where she needs an extra body on a full-time or part-time basis.

This shift has many repercussions for today's workers, especially those who have lost their jobs with a medium to large, well-established company. Whether the shift is positive or negative is all over the map depending on how informed the individual is about the workplace and how well they've positioned themselves to survive in it.

Many of today's small business owners were former, full-time employees in large companies who decided that self-employment made more sense for them than looking for

another, full-time job. Also, more young people coming out of college or university are starting their own businesses than at any other time in the past.

A New Set of Expectations

While there are no hard and fast rules that define how small and large businesses operate, there are some things that you generally can count on to be different between them. If you lost a job with a large company you've lived in a world where you could expect that your job included a decent benefit package, paid overtime, a nice office and other perks that you probably took for granted. If you expect to find all or most of these things when you join a small company you're probably going to be disappointed. You may also be disappointed if you expect to earn the same salary as you did in the past.

The president or owner or the principals of the company, who often risk everything they have to establish it, may not have many of the things that you may feel you're entitled to like security, benefits packages and so on, so it's unrealistic for you to expect to have them.

You'll probably wear more hats in your job than you have in the past and you could be much more involved in the important decision-making processes affecting where the company is going. You may have an opportunity to pick up some stock options if the company is planning to go public. You may become a telecommuter and perform most of your work from home and be expected to supply or help to purchase the PC that you need to do this. You may be a contract worker with no benefits included in your compensation and no buy-out or golden handshake at the end of your employment even if you've worked with the company for years.

You may have opportunities to advance your career—a thing that may never have happened with a large company. Your contributions could have much more influence over the success

or failure of the company. You may be expected to provide leadership in guiding the company in new directions and that could be a new role for you.

No More Entitlements

If you're over forty or have been strongly influenced by your parents' experience in the workplace you may need to make some significant and fundamental changes in your thinking about your career and what to expect in your working life. In yesterday's workplace, the relationship between the worker and the employer was much more paternalistic than it is today.

The reason why so many people are devastated by the loss of a full-time job often has more to do with other aspects than the financial one. What the individual also loses is a sense of belonging to a community, some dignity and self-respect, pride in what they do and they often have a sense of betrayal if they feel that they gave the company all that they had to offer. These non-tangible things that come with a job in a large company may not necessarily come with a job in a small company.

How people react to the changes that arise from going from a large to a small company will vary according to how secure they are with themselves, how well they adapt to change, how informed they are about the workplace and their ability to rise above the day-to-day challenges and view the transition that the workplace is going through from a broader, more philosophical point of view.

Take the Broader View

As the workplace goes through its current transition, those who have lost their jobs are having a tough time dealing with the realities of the new workplace. In many cases their kids are also looking at them and wondering what they should do to position themselves to earn a decent living. The range of emotions goes

from those who feel liberated by the changes going on in the workplace–good riddance to the traditional job is their attitude–while at the other end of the scale we have people who are devastated by the loss of their job. There's no quick fix to any of this. We'll just have to adjust to these changes as our ancestors had to adjust to the changes that took place in their lifetime.

There is work available but if you're looking for it to come in the shape of a traditional job with all of the benefits and security that we've become accustomed to you're probably going to be disappointed. Finding the work that's available is also going to be a lot more challenging. For most of us it will require developing new skills, being much more informed about what is going on in society and in the workplace and finally shedding some long-held attitudes about work, jobs and expectations.

You're going to have to become more adept at selling yourself and anticipating and understanding the needs of the employer that you want to work with. That's a new role for most of us and it won't come naturally. You'll have to learn how to do it and how to do it in a way that is effective for you.

Facing Reality

When the realities of the new workplace are laid out for us, most of us, at a rational level, can relate to them. It's common sense. The big challenge is to psychologically accept that reality and adjust our lives and attitudes towards earning a living. That challenge will continue for the foreseeable future because in that time frame most people around us will still have traditional jobs. One of the biggest problems that people face who have lost their jobs is looking around and seeing the majority of people they know still working in traditional jobs. This leaves them feeling victimized and lost.

Even though the majority of people are well aware that

significant changes are going on in the workplace, they can't really relate to the challenges that people who have lost their jobs are facing. They only get it when it happens to them or someone in their family.

There's denial going on here of course. Sure we know about the turmoil going on in the workplace but if we still have a job, we don't want to think too much about the challenges we would face if we lost that job. It's an attitude that many of us have towards major diseases as well and it explains why so many people are shattered when they lose their jobs. It's the "it'll never happen to me" syndrome. Our first reaction is to replace the job we lost with another job and if the prospects for that are bleak we panic and look at our situation from the worst possible point of view.

At some point however, we have to face the realities of the new workplace and one of the fundamental changes that we have to make in our attitude is to recognize the fact that there is work out there—just not necessarily jobs. We have to learn to cope with the new realities and adjust our approach to looking for work accordingly. That doesn't mean giving up looking for a job, if that's what is important to you. It means that you have to accept the fact that the route to finding that job will be different from what it has been in the past.

It's not all Bad

We should also try to be as objective as possible about the changes going on in the workplace. Some people have actually benefited from losing their jobs in that it has forced them to go through some soul searching about what is important to them in their careers and they have come out of the process happier for the experience. They find out that the job they were so attached to was a bad fit for them and that there are other more attractive options and ways to make a living that make sense for them.

Some people who get involved as contractors, initially with skepticism and trepidation, find that as they gain confidence and realize that they can earn a living this way, they wouldn't go back to a traditional job if it was offered to them. People who have just lost their job may have difficulty believing that but if they take the time to talk to people who have made the transition to contracting, and they should make a point of doing that, they will find that there is a world beyond that of the traditional job.

It's just possible that once we work our way through the transition that is currently going on in the workplace that we will pass on to our children a workplace that is healthier and more fulfilling for them.

Most of the Employment Opportunities are Hidden

Where are They?

Looking for employment opportunities in yesterday's workplace was a fairly straightforward procedure. You looked in the newspaper, called some friends and associates, maybe called a few employment agencies and checked with your professional association or union. You still want to do these things but they won't lead you to the majority of the employment opportunities that exist in today's workplace. You need to significantly expand your approach to include:

- Monitoring the web sites of companies that you would like to work with and who you feel are likely to be adding to their staff. Most company web sites these days have a section where they list their current employment opportunities. In the IT sector, this is the main way in which many companies advertise their jobs or contract opportunities. There's even an attitude on the part of some of these companies that if you can't find these opportunities on your own, they're not interested in you. In other words, they want people who are with it and who know how to find employment in their industry.

- Most professional associations have a job search service which they provide to their members. Companies who want to hire members deal directly with the association who in turn list the information on their web site. Some industry associations do this as well and sometimes you can access this information even if you're not a member.

- While most of the major newspapers still include a career or employment section, you may find more opportunities listed online in their electronic employment service which more and more companies are using instead of listing their

requirements in print. Most of these services allow you to post your resume on their site for free and some of them will automatically notify you when an opportunity comes up that matches your job specifications. Some of these sites are also a very effective way to monitor what is going on in the workplace and to learn from the experience of others who are actively seeking employment.

- There are lots of on-line job sites available today, some that are generic and others that specialize in particular professions or geographical areas. One of the biggest online job sites is www.monster.com. Other sites are excellent resources for monitoring workplace activity, trends and news, www.rileyguide.com being one of the best of these.

We've already learned that the vast majority of employment opportunities are generated by small businesses. These businesses may not have a web site at this point and if they do, it may not have a section on employment. In order to flush out these opportunities you need to access every possible tool.

Finding Employment Opportunities

Most of the opportunities that exist today never hit the mainstream media or get posted on a web site. The ways to find them include:

- Becoming a news hound and staying on top of trends in the workplace and in society. If you find that you are constantly being surprised by events when they are reported in the mainstream media, you're not doing as good a job as you need to of monitoring what's going on.

- You need to create your own database of news sites and job sites and monitor them regularly. Indiscriminate web

surfing is not the answer. You need to approach this area in a diligent, intelligent and creative way to ensure that you know more about what is going on in the workplace than the average person does. Many web sites offer free newsletters filled with current news and you can have them downloaded to you automatically on a regular basis. For example, if you want to keep abreast of events in the IT sector, www.wired.com is a good site to be connected to.

- There are always seminars, meetings, conventions, trade shows and courses going on in your community. You need to be monitoring these to make sure that you don't miss out on an event that could be important to you in your search for work opportunities. They also help to keep you informed about what is going on.

- You need to network effectively. There's a whole section devoted to this later in the book but let's recognize at this point that you must be constantly networking in a creative and effective way. Word of mouth is a pretty low tech way to advertise in today's world and many employment opportunities are filled this way.

- Use your imagination and be creative. Maybe the employment opportunity that you're looking for hasn't hatched yet in the mind of the employer who could benefit from using your set of skills. Look for unmet needs and the better you're connected to what is going on in the workplace and the world, the more likely you are to identify these. Maybe you need to create your own work opportunity by going directly to an employer with an idea whose time has come. Smart contractors and job seekers are doing this all the time.

- Get involved with professional and business organizations and that means volunteering and being active on the

executive, not casually showing up for an occasional, monthly meeting. Also monitoring the web sites of professional and business organizations both within and outside of your community is a good way to keep up with what's going on. Most of the Chambers of Commerce have a web site today and you may pick up some useful news items by monitoring them. Some of them also list their members and the companies the members are with. You could pick up some useful contact names. As long as you approach these people professionally and you are polite, they will probably be willing to give you some information.

- Notwithstanding all of the preceding references to the Internet, do not discount the print media, particularly trade magazines and professional publications. You will find useful information in these that you won't find on the Internet. Most cities have one or two primary publications that focus on business and industry and if you don't subscribe to these, you should at least monitor them regularly. To get an overview of all of the main business and industry publications, including international publications, look at www.ceoexpress.com on a regular basis.

- Your local library is still a very useful resource for keeping in touch with what is going on and accessing their services can save you a lot of time. Many libraries offer courses on doing basic research and how to use the Internet as a research tool.

Obviously, looking for work today is radically different from what it used to be. Key differences between people who are regularly employed and those who are struggling is how well they are informed about what is going on and how systematically they monitor workplace issues and trends.

Why Contracting Makes Sense

Myths About Contracting

As noted earlier, one of the most ironic perceptions about working as a contractor is that if you choose to go in this direction, you are cutting yourself off from the possibilty of finding a permanent job. Nothing could be further from the truth. By being active as a contractor, you're adding to your experience and expanding your network of contacts. You'll feel better about yourself since you're actively employed as opposed to sitting on the sidelines waiting for a permanent job to come up and if one does come up, you can take it.

The basis for this attitude is psychological. If you have earned your living for years by being employed in one or more permanent jobs and that's how your parents and grandparents earned their living, it's a challenge to accept the fact that you can earn a living as a contractor, given the unpredictability of it versus a permanent job. If you've lived with the security of a paycheque being deposited to your bank account every two weeks throughout your career it's not easy to make the adjustment to contracting where your earnings are far less predictable. Some people are so addicted to this stable way of living they have difficulty accepting the fact that you can earn a living any other way.

There tends to be a generation gap on this issue too. Younger people who are entering the workforce are more likely to adapt to contracting than their parents are. Since they haven't had the experience of years of getting a steady paycheque, they will adapt more readily to contracting. They're also less likely to be carrying around the emotional baggage that their parents are as they try to adjust to the significant changes that are taking place in the workplace.

It would be wrong to assume however, that young people are not challenged by the prospect of earning their living as

contractors. They are influenced by their parents' attitudes and society's addiction to a job as the only way to earn a living. Our education system doesn't prepare them well for the entrepreneurial option. They may also want the material benefits that come from having a permanent job—a house, a nice car and a comfortable lifestyle.

Because the concept of earning a living from having a permanent job is still very much a part of the fabric of the society that we live in, contracting tends to be seen as an inferior way to make a living. The fact is that some contractors are much better off than their counterparts who still have permanent jobs. They're earning more and keeping more of what they earn because of the tax advantages that go with contracting. They control when they go on vacation and how often they do it. They have much more freedom in how they work. They're not locked into a nine-to-five, Monday-to-Friday work schedule and they're more likely to work from home and spend less time commuting which can be a major stress factor for people who live in cities. While it's true that some contractors, especially those who are new to it are struggling, many others love what they do and would never go back to the lifestyle imposed by a permanent job.

Working as a contractor is rightfully seen as a form of owning your own business and that's what scares and makes some people uncomfortable with it. Not everyone sees themselves as an entrepreneur, even though most of our ancestors were self-employed before the modern concept of a job came along. But contracting is a more flexible form of earning a living that can give you the option of switching to a permanent job if one comes up, or staying with contracting if that is your preference. And it's not a life sentence. Even if you currently choose contracting because you love it, you can always change your mind in the future and opt for a permanent job if one is offered to you.

What Employers are Looking For

Looked at from the perspective of an employer, and remembering that typically means a small business today, contracting gives them the flexibility that is often a key factor in their decision to add another body or not. It's a sad fact that some people are cutting themselves off from finding work by being so inflexible in how they approach employers. They may have a set of skills that the employer can use but if the only option they are giving the employer is to hire them on a permanent basis, they may be shooting themselves in the foot.

If, on the other hand, they approach the employer on the basis of, here is the set of skills that I can offer you, let's see how I could apply them to the projects that you're currently working on and are about to start, they've just given that employer a whole different set of options for hiring them. Just as the idea of accepting anything other than a permanent job scares some people, the opposite is true for the employer. They're scared of committing to adding to the overhead costs of their operation by hiring a permanent employee when the only business they can count are current and upcoming projects. That may only be a guarantee of six months or a year's work and under those circumstances, which are common in today's workplace, it makes no sense to them to add a permanent employee to their staff.

There's also the question of the attitude of the person who is looking for work to consider. If they can't accept anything other than a permanent job, the message they're sending out, often without being aware of it, is hire me and look after me and that's the last thing that a small business owner wants. They need self-starters who understand the uncertainty in today's workplace and who are willing to share in the risk associated with operating in that environment.

Make it Easy to Get Hired

The number one criteria that today's employer will use in deciding whether or not to hire an additional employee is, will this person add value to my operation and make my life easier? If you understand that and approach the employer in a way that is centered on it, you've significantly increased your chances of being hired versus someone whose approach is still attuned to yesterday's workplace.

The way you communicate, your cover letter, resume or brochure have all got to be focussed on this issue and that will be a major factor in determining how successful you are in finding work. If you get the employer's attention and determine that indeed they could use your set of skills and let's say that potentially there's an opportunity for a six-month contract, make their decision even easier by suggesting that you ease your way into the contract, say one month at a time, rather than locking them into committing to the whole six months at the outset.

If the opportunity is for a long-term contract and you're excited about working with the company and you have no doubt that you can help them, you may even consider offering to work for them for a week for free to show them what you can do. Smart contractors have landed lucrative contracts by using this approach.

Guess Who Gets Offered the Job?

We've identified the fact that in today's workplace most of the work opportunities are hidden. One reason for this is that when companies decide that they want to make a permanent addition to their staff, the first place they will look to is their pool of contract workers, if that makes up part of their workforce. This makes sense since they know those people and what they can do and they in turn know the company.

If people who are looking for work and who are only comfortable with a permanent job understood this, they would be much more inclined to consider contract work as a viable route to finding more permanent work.

Trying Before Buying

Another reason why contract work makes sense for both the employer and those who are looking for work is that it gives both parties a chance to get to know one another before making a more permanent commitment. Our working relationships are the only relationships in our lives that we approach with an attitude of making it a permanent commitment before the parties involved know one another.

You can interview, test and reference check all you want in considering a potential employee but experience shows us that it's only after working together for a period of time that either party knows if they are compatable with the other party or not. This is another argument for both sides to enter into a contract work arrangement before committing to a more permanent one.

The Need for Self-Promotion

Why You Have to Do It

One of the main factors that distinguish people who are succeeding in today's workplace from those who are struggling in it is how well they understand the need for self-promotion and how effective they are at doing it. Some people, especially professionals who are over forty and who have lost their jobs are really challenged by this. Some of them don't see why they should have to do it, after all, they are professionals, accountants, engineers, etc., and they achieved success in their careers before they lost their job. Surely, they reason, their qualifications and experience speak for themselves.

Another reason for being uncomfortable with self-promotion could be your upbringing or your cultural background. You may see the whole subject as unseemly. Blowing your own horn is something you were taught was undignified and this attitude may have been re-enforced by blowhards that you've come across in your life.

The first thing you need to do is to understand what self-promotion is, in the context of doing it to find work. If you have an aversion to loud, self-aggrandizing people, that's good because that's the last thing you want to become. Employers are not bullied, schmoozed or coerced into hiring people, they will be just as turned off by this behaviour as you are. On the other hand, they're not mind readers, so you can hardly expect them to determine for themselves what your strengths are and how they may be of value to them.

You need to be aware of another one of those shifts that have occurred in the workplace. In yesterday's world, often your experience and qualifications did speak for themselves, so you could still succeed in looking for work with a fairly passive approach. Also you were probably responding to a newspaper ad where the requirements for getting hired were clearly spelled

out. Finally, you were probably applying to a large company that had a Personnel or Human Resources department that had time to assess applications that were not as well prepared as they could be.

That's all changed. Remember, most of the work opportunities today are generated by small companies who don't have Personnel or Human Resources departments. Often this task is handled by someone whose expertise is in another area and hiring is only one of several hats that they wear.

You will often be applying to companies on speculation that they may need your skills rather than responding to a specific ad that you saw in a newspaper or on the Internet. Under these circumstances, the applications that will get attention are those that are very focussed, where the applicant has done some research on the company and their resume is effectively designed to highlight their strengths and how those can benefit the company.

Communication skills are far more important than they used to be, especially in the area of looking for work. The workplace is a more fast-paced and busy environment than it used to be and it is more difficult to get an employer's attention. The focus of the communication must be clear on what you can do for them and not the other way around and it must be specific and geared to their needs and not be a general description of your past career.

If you are soliciting companies for contract work, maybe you should replace your resume with a simple brochure and cover letter that again, have as the main focus, your strengths and how those can benefit the company.

Managing Your Own Career

Here is another requirement for succeeeding in today's workplace that people don't pay enough attention to. You need to be far more cognizant about who you are, what you're good

at and what type of people and companies you want to work with. If you're currently working on a contract you should have a plan of action for finding your next contract. It's always a juggling act for today's contract worker.

Unless you're one of the lucky ones who still have a stable job and work for a company that provides some help to guide and map out a career strategy for you, you'll have to take ownership of this issue yourself. Even if you're in a stable job you should have some kind of plan in place in case you lose it.

You are responsible for managing your own career and the only security you have is tied directly to how marketable your skills are, how creative you are in finding work, how well you communicate and how good you are at recognizing opportunities where you can apply your skills.

The first step in managing your own career is to be very clear on what skills you have to sell to potential employers. Most people are weak in this area. Part Two will eliminate that weakness by getting you to go through a series of exercises to determine exactly what it is you have to sell to potential employers. This will set the stage for Part Three which focusses on how to market yourself. You can't sell yourself effectively unless you're crystal clear on what you have to sell. The better the job you do in Part Two, the more comfortable you will be with marketing yourself.

Summary

The objective of Part One is to make you aware of the changes that have occurred in the workplace. You won't be successful in finding work unless you understand these changes and their impact on you. Most people don't understand them and the consequences of that are: if they lose their job, they feel lost, or if they decide to become a contract worker, they don't know how to go about it.

To be successful, you need to understand the workplace and the changes going on in it at a level far beyond that of the average person. If you don't understand it you'll make the same mistakes that most people make, i.e., using an obsolete approach and set of tools to find work and you'll also be caught off guard when the changes occur. Here's a recap of what has been covered:

- You need to understand the difference between looking for work and looking for a job. There's a lot of work available today it's just not packaged in the form of a job—as most people understand the term.

  You need to understand that some of the tangible and non-tangible features that were always part of a traditional job are often not included in contract work.

- You must understand that most of the work opportunities that exist today are found in small companies and if you've spent your career in a large company, you'll have to change your perception as to your role in the small company and what is expected of you.

- Since most of the work opportunities that exist today are hidden you need to know how to find them.

- You need to know how employers make their hiring decisions and what they are looking for in contract workers.

- You must understand that your success in today's workplace is tied directly to how effective you are at self-promotion and what self-promotion means in the context of looking for work.

As long as you're green, you grow,
but the moment you think you're
ripe, you begin to rot.

Part Two:
What Exactly do You Have to Offer?

What is Important and Relevant for You?

One of the positive aspects of the transition that the workplace is going through is that more people are being reflective about their careers, both those currently in a career and younger people who are looking at career options. Before the transition started, you could almost guarantee yourself a secure career by acquiring an education or specialized training that led to a job in one of the professions like accounting or engineering or in one of the trades like carpentry or plumbing.

Since that guarantee is no longer a certainty, more people are taking a broader view of their options for earning a living. One example of that is the significant increase in the area of self-employment. To be successful in today's workplace you need to know what your skills and interests are regardless of whether you're starting out or have years of experience.

That means you have to take the time to go through some self-analysis, either on your own or with some professional help, to determine what your skills and interests are. Most people are challenged by this because it's not easy. It will take time to do it properly and you'll have to go through it several times to get it right.

Taking a long look inside yourself is difficult. Personal reflection is not high on the priority list of some people. Just get on with life is their attitude (and forget this airy-fairy, touchy-feely stuff). Middle-aged businesspeople can be especially challenged by personal reflection. Most people think that they know themselves pretty well and can't see the need for this self-analysis.

You can be sure that those who are succeeding in today's workplace and those who will succeed in the future, are those who have taken the time to do a good and thorough job in this area. If you try to short-circuit the process or approach it superficially, you'll pay a price. You'll flounder when you get in front of an employer or decision maker because you won't be

secure in knowing who you are and what you have to offer and you'll do a lousy job of selling yourself for the same reasons. You're also more likely to end up in a job or engaged in work that's not a good fit for you.

So let's be clear on the importance of this section before we go any further in the book. Like it or not, it's the key to success. It's the foundation upon which all other aspects of your career success depend. If you're not prepared to spend the time it takes to do a good job here, don't bother with the rest of the book, you'll be wasting your time.

Get Some Help

Don't try to do all of this on your own. Try to engage a mentor or someone who knows you and whose judgement you trust. Since you are going to identify your key strengths and core set of skills, it makes sense to get a second opinion on just what those are. It will also help to verify what types of jobs, work opportunities and types of companies are best suited to you.

You may also have a tendency to be too narrow when looking at your options in your career. When considering your key strengths and interests, don't limit yourself to what you have done only in your work, it's important to include your life outside of work too. Your profile should include all of you, not just the part that relates to your work. Think broadly and boldly in looking at your options. Focus on your limitless potential rather than on your limiting past.

Be Patient with Yourself

Don't expect this process to come easily to you. Take as much time as you need to come up with a profile that you are comfortable with. Include your failures as well as your successes when analyzing your past but keep the failures in perspective. T.J. Watson, the founder of IBM said, "Success is on the far

side of failure". What he meant by this is in order to be successful you'll have to endure your share of failure. In identifying failures, make sure that you know why things didn't work out the way you expected them to and learn from the experience.

When analyzing the successes in your career, focus on the projects that you worked on and what the payoff was to the company and the people involved. Being clear about the successful projects that you worked on and your role with them will increase your strength and self-confidence. Once you've done a good job in this area you'll be eager to sell yourself.

You'll know what excites you and what you're good at and your enthusiasm will come across when you're talking to a potential employer or client. Don't be reticent about your successes. Being successful in selling yourself comes in part from knowing why you were successful in the past and in knowing that you can apply the same skills to help the employer or client that you're talking with.

An Ongoing Process

You'll never know enough about yourself, your skills and why people would buy them. You have to keep working at it and polishing your presentation and communication skills. One of the key reasons why people are struggling to find work today is that they are very complacent about identifying their key skills and strengths and consequently they cannot do a good job of selling themselves. It shouldn't come as a surprise that they don't like selling themselves. They haven't done their homework and therefore they are not equipped to sell effectively.

Something that is recommended you do as part of this process is get a copy of the best-selling book *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, by Richard Bolles, and complete the exercises in the section titled "Parachute Workbook & Resource Guide". This is regarded as the most complete career guide available. It was

first published in 1970 and is updated every year. The *Wall Street Journal* identified it as one of the 100 most influencial books of the twentieth century. You can preview it and pick up other useful information at www.jobhuntersbible.com.

The following exercises will take some time to complete and will require lots of revisions before you come up with answers that you are satisfied and comfortable with, so get yourself a pen and lots of writing paper.

How Career Fit are You?

If you are "Career Fit" you should be able to easily answer the following questions:

- What are your top three strengths and talents?
- What environment brings out your best work?
- What were the most satisfying aspects of your past work?
- What are your work values?
- What is your work style?
- How do your skills match your current workplace needs?
- What have you done to upgrade your skills in the past year?
- What career action plans are you currently working on?
- Do you have a written career development plan?

If you couldn't answer these questions comfortably, you need to work on getting into "Career Shape".

Defining Your Personal & Career Profile

Who Are You?

Can you imagine a company that's about to launch a new product line sending their sales force out to see their customers and present that product line before they have given them any training on it? Or an athlete who rarely gives any thought to the strengths and weaknesses of an opponent or team that he or she is about to play? Or an actor who doesn't rehearse before going in front of an audience or performing in a stage show, movie or television program?

Because they're professionals, they understand that it is imperative that they know exactly what to say or do before they get in front of the customer, opponent or audience. You need to take your cue from these experts in preparing yourself for getting in front of a prospective employer or client. Just like them, the more you practise, rehearse and train, the greater will be your chances of success when you meet an employer and the more confident you'll be when selling yourself.

The more you understand your successes, abilities, interests and attitudes, the more comfortable you'll be with yourself. It's also more likely that you will be talking to employers who are a good match for you rather than wasting your time with companies that are incompatible with your goals.

In the first exercise, select from the following list (feel free to add to it) what you consider to be your top five strengths in terms of your personality and character. Then come up with at least two examples of situations where you have shown those strengths. Finally, rank them in terms of their importance to you so that if you were asked in an interview to name your two, top strengths, you could easily do so.

Personal Characteristics

Friendly	Good-Natured	Quiet
Adaptable	Helpful	Adventurous
Honest	Realistic	Aggressive
Humorous	Reflective	Ambitious
Reserved	Assertive	Responsible
Kind	Calm	Likeable
Careful	Cautious	Loyal
Sensible	Cheerful	Sensitive
Sincere	Sociable	Competitive
Modest	Confident	Conservative
Optimistic	Consistent	Outgoing
Curious	Patient	Thoughtful
Tough	Discreet	Persuasive
Easy-Going	Poised	Understanding
Emotional	Progressive	Witty

Personal Characteristics - My Top Five Strengths

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Situations Where I've Shown Them

Example One

Example Two

Example Three

Example Four

Example Five

What Are Your Values?

Who do you admire and respect? Which companies would you like to work for or would you recommend to a friend and what is it about them that you respect? What are the attributes of the ideal types of work that you would like to be involved with in terms of their impact on you, your family and friends and the world you live in? From the following list, select the five most important values that you want to associate with the work that you do or would like to do. Add to the list any values that are not shown but are important to you.

Value	Example
Helping Society	Something that helps to improve the world we live in.
Helping Others	Something that directly helps individuals or groups.
Public Contact	You need lots of this daily.
Work with Others	You need to belong to a group.
Work Alone	You prefer to work on projects on your own.
Competition	You like to test yourself against others.
Make Decisions	You like being in control.
Work Under Pressure	You thrive on being continually challenged.

Influence People	You like to have a personal impact on others.
Knowledge	You need to be continually learning.
Work Mastery	You need to be an expert in what you do.
Artistic Creativity	You need freedom to express your talents.
General Creativity	You need to influence how things are done.
Aesthetics	The beauty of things and ideas must be in your work.
Supervision	You like to be responsible for others.
Change and Variety	These must be a part of what you do.
Precision Work	Attention to detail is important to you.
Stability	You like a routine that is predictable.
Security	You must feel that your job is for the long-term.
Recognition	You need regular feedback on your worth.
Fast Pace	You need to work in a dynamic environment.
Excitement	You must experience this in your work.

Adventure	There must be some risk inherent in your work.
Financial Gain	Being rewarded financially is very important to you.
Physical Challenge	You need to use your physical abilities in your work.
Independence	You don't want someone looking over your shoulder.
Moral Fulfillment	Your work must meet your moral standards.
Community	You need to participate in community affairs.
Time Freedom	You need to work according to your own schedule.

My Five Most Important Values

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Education and Training

An essential part of knowing yourself and what you have to offer a potential employer or client is understanding the education and training you have received in your life. Many people tend to be very narrow when they address this issue and focus almost exclusively on the formal education that they have received. Your formal education is important but so is what you have learned informally from volunteer organizations, travel, research, reading, sports activities, artistic pursuits, hobbies, your religion, your culture, the Internet, social groups you belong to and anything else you can think of that has influenced you.

Make a list of all of the formal education you have received and include any degrees, diplomas and certificates you have earned. Also include a list of all of the informal education you have received and the things that you learned, any awards or trophies that you received and any commendations or praise you received for what you did.

From all of this, make a list of the subjects, courses, seminars, etc., that you liked the most and what it was about them that you liked. Identify areas you would like to include in your career.

Again, from all of your education and training, identify the subjects and areas that you disliked the most and what it was about them you didn't like. If you could chart your career from now on, which of these subjects or areas would you like to exclude from the work that you will be involved with?

From all of the above, what achievements are you most proud of and what is it about them that gives you the most satisfaction or makes you feel good? Be sure to include all of your lifetime learning experiences, not just the ones from your formal education. Finally, rank these things in terms of their importance to you.

Weaknesses

The final component you need to be aware of to understand yourself is to recognize your weaknesses. Everyone has them. What areas do you need to work on and improve on? What skills need to be developed or updated and what new areas or technologies do you need to get some exposure to?

Appraising Your Career

Now that you have a clear picture of yourself from a personal point of view, you need to create a similar picture in terms of your career up to this point. From the following list (and again, feel free to add to it), select what you consider to be your top five strengths in terms of your career characteristics. Then, come up with at least two examples where you have shown these strengths. Finally, rank them in terms of their importance to you.

Career Characteristics

Able to Concentrate	Enthusiastic	Punctual
Able to Handle Stress	Quick	Accurate
Rational	Imaginative	Reliable
Analytical	Independent	Intelligent
Resourceful	Attentive to Detail	Businesslike
Risk-Taking	Self-Confident	Logical
Self-Controlled	Mature	Clear-Thinking
Methodical	Competent	Meticulous
Stable	Motivated	Supportive
Conscientious	Open-Minded	Tactful
Teachable	Organized	Tenacious
Creative	Thorough	Diplomatic
Persevering	Trusting	Trustworthy
Efficient	Practical	Precise
Versatile	Empathetic	Inventive

Career Characteristics - My Top Five Strengths

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Situations Where I've Shown Them

Example One

Example Two

Example Three

Example Four

Example Five

Skills

Over your career you have accumulated considerable skills and it is very important that you can readily identify these when you are talking to an employer or potential client. Often the decision to hire you is based on your skill set first and your personal characteristics second. Compile a list of your skills and group them into the following three categories; specialized, communication and general.

Specialized skills are things like computer programming, designing graphics, compiling financial statements and so on. Communication skills would include writing, teaching, motivating, directing and mediating. General skills would include organizing, scheduling, compiling, initiating and similar things.

Once you have compiled your list, select from it five skills that you most want to use in your career and give at least two examples of situations where you have applied these skills and what the outcome was in each case.

Specialized	Communication	General
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Skill # One
Where I've Applied It

Skill # Two
Where I've Applied It

Skill # Three
Where I've Applied It

Skill # Four
Where I've Applied It

Skill # Five
Where I've Applied It

Achievements

Identify your successes and achievements during your career. What did you do? What did you learn? What did you enjoy? What did you accomplish? What were you commended for? List as many of these as you can think of and then select the top five in terms of their importance to you and your career. Finally rank them in terms of which ones you are most proud of.

Example One

Example Two

Example Three

Example Four

Example Five

Interests

We all have developed preferences for the type of work that we do and activities that go along with that work, be it a job or a contract. From the following list, select the top three areas of work that you would most prefer to be involved with and in each case identify what it is about that area that appeals to you.

From the same list, select the top three areas that you would like to avoid if you had a choice and again, identify what it is about the area that you dislike.

Type of Work

- Influence the attitudes or ideas of others.
- Gather information through direct contact with people.
- Help people with personal problems.
- Instruct other people in various tasks or skills.
- Supervise and be responsible for the work of others.
- Consult or advise others.
- Confront others, present them with difficult decisions.
- Investigate people by obtaining information about them.
- Provide service to others.
- Sell or market products or services to individuals or companies.
- Mediate between contending parties.
- Organize others, bring people together in co-operative efforts.
- Make decisions about others.
- Provide career counseling to others.
- Entertain or perform for enjoyment.
- Understand people and study their behaviour.
- Develop and discuss ideas and theories.
- Make decisions based on definite rules and measurements.
- Explain or interpret ideas and concepts.
- Use materials or equipment in work, e.g., computers, graphic materials.
- Work with survey data or other information on public opinion.
- Conduct investigations or research.
- Work with documents and records.

My Three Favourite Areas of Work

Example One

What I Like About It

Example Two

What I Like About It

Example Three

What I Like About It

Three Areas of Work that I'd Like to Avoid

Example One

What It is I Dislike About It

Example Two

What It is I Dislike About It

Example Three

What It is I Dislike About It

Your Career/Life Highlights and Lowlights

Everybody experiences ups and downs in their careers and in their personal lives. As part of the process of defining who you are, what is important to you and what you want from your career, it is essential that you be aware of these ups and downs and that you learn from them.

When analyzing your past, don't just focus on your work experience. Also include what you experienced outside of work when getting your education, participating in volunteer organizations, playing sports, learning arts and belonging to other groups.

Identify your favourite job or project and what it was about it that you liked the most. Do the same for the companies/employers or organizations, managers and co-workers that you have worked with and again, include your experience outside of work.

My Favourite Job or Project

What I Liked Most About It

My Favourite Company/Employer or Organization

What I Liked Most About Them

My Favourite Managers

What I Liked Most About Them

My Favourite Co-Workers

What I Liked Most About Them

Now do the reverse and identify the jobs or projects, companies/employers or organizations, managers and co-workers that you disliked the most and what it was about them that you disliked.

Jobs or Projects that I Disliked the Most

What I Disliked About Them

Companies/Employers or Organizations that I Disliked the Most

What I Disliked About Tthem

Managers I Disliked the Most

What I Disliked About Them

Co-Workers I Disliked the Most

What I Disliked About Them

Summarizing Your Career

From all of the preceding exercises, and what you learned about yourself in the book *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, it is time to draw up a composite picture of yourself on the following chart. Include under each category the most important areas or things that you identified from the exercises.

Personal Characteristics	Career Characteristics	Values

Interests	Skills	Achievements

"Know Thyself" is an old but relevant saying and now that you have taken the time to go through all of this analysis, you should have a pretty clear picture of yourself and what is important to you. It is critical that you have this before you get in front of a prospective employer or client so take some time to reflect on this and internalize it.

At the same time, give yourself a pat on the back because you've done something that most people don't do. Like the athlete who trained hard and the actor who rehearsed well, you're now ready to sell yourself and you'll do a much better job of it than your competition who, unlike you, haven't done their homework.

The final step in this process is to clearly identify what your most marketable skills are and where you want to apply them. From all of the above information, identify and rank what you consider to be your top five to ten marketable skills and again, get them clearly etched in your mind so that you can rattle them off any time you need to.

My Most Marketable Skills

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Let's also make sure that you know where you're headed in your career and why you're going in that direction by being very clear on what you want to do, where you want to do it and who you want to do it with.

The Type of Work I Want to Do

The Key Attributes of This Work

The Types of Companies or Employers I Want to Work With

The Key Attributes of These Companies or Employers.

The Type of People I Want to Work With

The Key Attributes of These People

Succeeding As A Contractor

The workplace continues to go through the transition from being primarily job-centered, as it has been for over 150 years, to a more fluid mix of jobs and people turning to self-employment, including contracting. People who choose contracting, both those with considerable experience in the workplace and those just starting out in it, face numerous challenges, many of which will be new experiences for them. Following are some of those challenges and some things for the new contractor to consider.

Market Yourself Continually

There's a whole section on this area later in the book but let's recognize the need for it at this point. Now that you've gone through an extensive analysis of your background and have identified your marketable skills and where you want to apply them, you're in good shape to tackle this challenge. You've also eliminated one of the biggest weaknesses people have when they approach this area, i.e., they don't take the time to go through the analysis that you just did and consequently they are not ready to sell themselves.

Even people who come from a selling or marketing background in the corporate world are challenged by this area. Selling yourself is a whole different scenario from selling products or services for a company and these people, like most others, commonly do a poor job of defining their marketable skills.

You know more about selling than you think you do. When you were a kid, you did a pretty good job of it when you wanted something from your parents. As a parent, you're constantly doing it (or trying to), in steering your kids in the direction that you would like them to take.

So drop the notion that you don't know anything about

selling, it's not true. Besides, you have no choice if you want to be successful. Even with your selling skills, you have the same challenge the sales professionals have; the need to continually sharpen those skills and to monitor which techniques are working for you and which ones aren't working.

Success for large companies comes in part from knowing that they must continually find newer and better ways to sell their products and services. So must you. You'll always be challenged to know more about yourself, your skills and why people would buy them. Knowing yourself, your market, both current and prospective, will be a daily challenge from now on.

Build up your network of contacts and potential clients. Sharpen your selling skills and be alert to the changes that are always taking place in the market. Finding time to sell yourself and line up new contracts when you're currently working on a contract is a challenge that any experienced contractor will readily attest to but it's something that you must do.

You simply have to internalize the fact that your livelihood depends on how well you know your market and sell your services so give it the priority it deserves. Finally, don't be modest or reticent. Be proud of your successes and the set of skills that you've developed and recognize that you will be helping your client or employer by getting them to use those skills. This is one of the keys to confidently selling yourself.

Broaden Your Vision

People who are new to contracting have a tendency to think too narrowly in terms of what their skills are and the potential market for them. For example if you speak more than one language, that could be an asset but only if you see it as one and are always alert to situations in the market where you could use it. If you understand cultures and systems outside of the country that you live in, that could be a marketable asset too.

If you have spent most of your career in one industry, that

experience can be applied in other industries too but many people often fail to see this. If you are a qualified accountant, it doesn't follow that your services are limited to situations directly related to the financial services area. Your education, training, life and work experiences give you a much broader repertoire of skills that you have to offer.

If you're like most people, one of the things you learned in analyzing your career and life skills in the previous section is that you have interests and skills that you've never used. You may also have detected areas of work that you're attracted to and suited to that you've never seriously considered as areas where you could earn a living. Now's your chance to get rid of that type of narrow thinking. One of the positive aspects that is coming out of the transition that the workplace is going through is that people are finding ways to earn a living in areas that they find much more interesting and fulfilling than those that they previously worked in.

Communication Skills

Your ability to communicate effectively becomes far more significant when you are self-employed versus when you are in the corporate world. Everything from communicating via a computer to being able to quickly get someone's attention about what you do and its value, need to be sharp and continually polished. Having marketable skills means nothing unless you convince someone that they will benefit from using them, in terms that make economic sense for both of you.

All of your marketing materials, from your business cards to your resume or brochure, your web site and anything else that you use, should project a professional and consistent message about your services and the benefits of using them. You also need to be ready at any time to verbalize this message in a succinct, persuasive manner.

Among the various skills that you need to be a successful

contractor, good communication skills are imperative. If they are not a high priority with you, they need to be. Professional communicators, like actors, news broadcasters and commentators are continually practising and honing their skills. If they have to do that to stay on top and be successful, so do you.

Commit to Continuous Learning

One of your ongoing challenges is to always be learning about yourself and your skills, the markets that you sell to and those that you would like to sell to, why your peer contractors are successful, why you get the business you get, why you're not getting the business you'd like to get and the issues and trends going on in the market that affect you.

Consider the following questions:

- Are you stretching yourself in a positive way?
- What have you learned in the past six months?
- What would you like to learn in the next six months?
- Are you on top of the trends in your field?
- Do you know what skills you need to sharpen or pick up to ensure your future success?
- Do you review the projects that you have completed to see what you learned from them?
- Do you schedule training and education during times that you know will be slow?
- Do you regularly study the latest literature in your field?

Don't confine your learning to what is being offered by the traditional educational outlets or the profession that you belong to. Leading-edge trends and information are available via the Internet, some television programs and other media as well as meetings and seminars that are held in your community.

Recognize that among the many hats you wear, Training Manager should be one of them. Training for you, that is.

Stay on Top of the Market

In days past, the workplace was a much simpler place and it was easier to stay in touch with what was going on. To stay informed today, you need to be much more vigilant and creative. As we have already noted, large companies are no longer the centers of activity. Most of the action these days is found in small companies. Since they don't have Public Relations or Communications departments feeding the media about their activities you need to develop a keen sense of smell to sniff out what is going on.

We have also noted that most of the work opportunities these days are hidden, so if you're not aggressively monitoring what is going on in the market, you're going to miss out on a lot of these opportunities. The Internet is a useful tool for staying connected these days but how effective it will be for you is directly related to how creative you are in using it. Casual or occasional surfing on the Internet will not cut it. You need to develop a strategy for monitoring the web sites that are important to you and invest some time to find out what these sites are. The web sites you monitor will depend on what type of work you do and are looking for. A list of useful web sites is provided later.

When news comes out on trends and important events in the workplace, what is your typical reaction to it? Did you anticipate these things or did you already know about them? You need to be much more informed about what is going on in the workplace than the average person is if you want to succeed in today's work environment. That means knowing which types of media are useful to you, be it print, television, the Internet, newsletters you subscribe to and just being alert to things going on in your community.

Talk to successful contractors and you will find that they are always very well informed about what is going on and are seldom surprised by events when they are reported in the mainstream media. That is due in part to them having an effective network of contacts. How you can develop a similar network is covered later in the book.

Market research is one of those areas, like getting regular exercise and eating sensibly and so on, that everybody agrees is important. Talk to those who are struggling in today's workplace and you will consistently see that they approach market research passively or simply don't understand how important it is.

Go Where the Action Is

If you're connected, you know where the action is. Get focussed on those areas, find out who the players are and what companies are the leaders. When making the transition into contracting, there is a temptation to market yourself into the areas that you are familiar with. If the growth in these areas is flat or declining, stay away from them.

Use your own judgement and observations about what is going on in the market. Question what is being reported, don't take it as gospel. Not all of the "hot" areas of growth that we hear about in the media are necessarily so. Don't assume that the people doing the reporting are experts in these areas. Feel free to question what they are saying and compare it to what you are learning about what is going on in the market. Scrutinize statistics closely. Often what appears to be news is based on data that is several years old.

Don't eliminate specialized areas of growth as prospects because you have no experience in the area. There may be opportunities to sell your skills there. For example, not everyone who works in the IT sector is a technological wizard. These companies, like all other companies, need experienced

accountants, administrators, materials managers, human resources personnel and so on. If you do target this area, you better get informed about what is going on in it. Obtain a reasonable level of computer literacy and be ready, in broad terms, to talk their language. There's also a way to approach these companies that is covered later in the book.

Watch Your Finances

The financial implications of contracting are more complex than they were when your career was job-centered. Your cash flow will probably be erratic. Remember when you land a nice contract that it might be some time before your next one is in the hopper. Most people would benefit from advice from an accountant or financial manager who is experienced in dealing with self-employed people.

We tend to take things for granted when we know that a paycheque is being deposited into our bank account every two weeks. Now, you need to adjust your attitude about your finances. In between contracts, you'll still have expenses, so keep a close watch on them.

One of the questions that people who are new to contracting struggle with is how much to charge for their services. In broad terms, you need to know what the going rate is for your type of services but it's far from being that simple. Large, successful companies periodically resort to sales or other promotions to increase business in slow times. If things are slow for you, you may have to be more flexible in your pricing than you would be otherwise.

How much you charge is often a function of how badly you want the business, how busy you are and other factors. Don't give your business away but don't be too inflexible on your pricing either. You'll find yourself thinking on your feet on this one more than you'd like.

Finally, talk to an accountant to get on top of all of the tax

implications of your business and the records that you have to keep. Use quiet times to keep this area up to date, don't leave it all until the end of the year.

Stock Options

A prospective client may offer you stock options in lieu of cash payments for your services. It is quite common these days in the IT sector, especially with new companies. Forget it. Notwithstanding the fact that a few individuals have done well from picking up stock options that they later cashed in when the company became successful, it's not usually a viable option.

Leave the stock options to the venture capitalists and other professionals who know what they're doing and who are willing to take the gamble. Tell prospective clients that you operate on a fee-for-service basis only, i.e., you get paid in cash for the services that you provide.

Manage Your Time Effectively

Eliminating tire-kickers quickly is a skill that you need to develop. When people respond to your marketing efforts, especially when you are new to contracting, you tend to be flattered and excited and you don't pay as much attention to qualifying them as you should. They may need your skills but can't afford them. They may be stingy or have cash flow problems. You could invest a lot of your time before you find out about these problems.

Know what your terms are, how much you charge and when you expect to be paid and get them on the table as fast as you can. Serious prospects will not be offended by this. Be very alert at this time also to their body language and any other signs when you are talking about payment terms. If your gut tells you that there may be a problem with a potential client, your gut is probably right. Never enter into a contract if you have any

doubts about the client's ability or willingness to pay you.

If the assignment is a long one or needs a lot of preparation on your part before it can begin, come to an equitable financial arrangement with the client to ensure that some cash is flowing your way. If you become concerned about a client's ability to pay you after you've started a contract, cover yourself. Don't hand over any reports or other information that they want until they pay you. If you do hand over the results of your work without being paid, you've lost control. Forget about suing them, the only ones who win in lawsuits are lawyers.

The new, self-employed contractor often has a tendency to be shy about getting to the specifics about when and how much they will be paid. Eliminate that type of thinking or it will cost you dearly. The only people who will be offended by approaching your payment terms in a businesslike manner are the ones that you want to stay away from in the first place.

Saying no to potential business is sometimes the smart thing to do. Know your limitations both in terms of what you can deliver and how much time you can commit to a project. Refresh yourself on weekends and make time for personal priorities like family, exercise and self-improvement. You're not Superhero, so don't try to be. You're not perfect and you'll make your share of mistakes, especially when you're new to contracting, so don't beat up on yourself when you do.

Your body will signal you when you need to back off, slow down or laugh at yourself or the world. Listen to these signals and act accordingly. Remember, nobody ever went to their grave saying "I wish I had spent more time at the office".

Physical/Mental Fitness

One thing you would be wise to do in making the transition to contracting is to make a commitment to yourself to increase the level of your physical and mental fitness. Being a contractor is more demanding than being employed in a full-time job. You

will have your share of disappointments and times when you will wonder if you're going to make it.

The way you'll get through these times and minimize their effect on you is to toughen up your mind and your body. You don't have to become a marathon runner but you better get out in the fresh air on a regular basis and do something physical. There are opportunities to do this without making major disruptions in your life. Walk or cycle instead of driving whenever possible. Walk up stairs instead of taking the elevator. Get up half an hour earlier and do some stretching or get in a quick run or walk.

Make your diet healthier by reducing your intake of alcohol, fatty foods and desserts. If you smoke, try to quit or at least cut down. Your doctor will be happy to help you to do this.

Your mind is like your stomach, you can fill it with junk and pay the price or enrich it and reap the benefits. Monitor what you read and what television programs you watch. The library is full of biographies of people who started out with nothing, faced incredible hardships in their lives, yet went on to great success. Seek these out and read them. You can't help but be inspired by their example.

Spirituality has become a common term in our vernacular. It can refer to anything from traditional religion to modern techniques for meditating. Spirituality has been an integral part of every group and race of people in the history of mankind and it is a part of your background, regardless of what ethnic group you belong to. You can conclude from that, that it is important and if it is not a part of your life, you're missing out on something relevant.

Stay Flexible

One of the most common mistakes made by people who are new to contracting is not being flexible enough when determining what they will do or what types of assignments they will accept. There's nothing wrong with looking at something that would be considered a lateral move or a move up from the job that you had, just don't make it the only thing that you will consider.

Don't equate taking on a contract with being hired for a full-time job. If the assignment you're taking on isn't at the level that you're used to, so what? It's only a contract, it's not permanent. The important thing is that you're back in the game, making money, expanding your network and who knows where it could lead? One thing you can be sure of is that by landing a contract position, you increase your chances of finding something better in the future versus staying unemployed and holding out for a better position.

Eliminate any thought that you may have that there's any stigma attached to accepting a contract at a level below where you were in the past. It's quite the opposite. Your friends, promoters and colleagues will admire you for finding work and besides nobody needs to know exactly what you're doing. If anyone asks, tell them the truth, you're working on a contract at so and so company, period.

Take a broader perspective. While the current workplace is no picnic for a lot of people, things will improve at some point. When they do, there will be opportunities for those people who were smart enough and gutsy enough to stick it out in the tough times, found work, expanded their network and maintained a positive attitude. Make a commitment now that you're going to be one of those who will capitalize on the opportunities that will come along when the market picks up.

You're a capable, experienced individual with more to offer the world than you give yourself credit for. Look at all avenues,

give your imagination a boost. Do not restrict your options to things directly related to what you have done in the past. There's a whole world of alternatives out there.

There are people who have lost their jobs and who have found a way to make a living doing something that previously was only a hobby and completely unrelated to their career. There are lots of others who are unemployed and vegetating who would consider such an idea goofy and off-the-wall. Find what it is you love to do and just do it.

Checklist # One

- Do you have a clear understanding in your mind about what you want to do, what you have to sell and how it benefits those who buy it? Could you verbalize these things quickly and in a proactive way if you ran into an old acquaintance or got a telephone inquiry?

- Are you excited about what you're doing or are about to do? Have you moved beyond your dependency on a job? Do you recognize that many people are making a living as contractors and that you will do that too?

- Do you look and sound like a contractor? Are you ready to sell yourself at any time?

- If an opportunity comes up for you to do some business, are you clear on what your terms are? How much will you charge? What are your payment terms? Are you ready to eliminate tire-kickers?

- Have you increased your connectivity to what is going on in the workplace? Are you constantly alert to all of the relevant media coverage on workplace issues?

- Do you have a financial plan in place for your business? Do you have a system in place to keep track of all your expenses? Do you know what your accountant will ask you for at the end of the year and do you keep right on top of this area?

- Have you committed to increasing your physical and mental fitness? Have you blocked out times for these activities on your schedule? What specifically, are you going to do to increase your effectiveness over the next three months?

Bite off more than you
can chew—then chew on it.

Mary Kay Ash

Part Three:
How to Market Yourself

Sales and Marketing Defined

These two terms are used interchangeably and sometimes create confusion because in traditional terms, they mean quite different things. First of all, marketing is something that precedes selling. It refers to a wide range of activities that have as their objective, getting the attention of potential buyers of a product or service.

These activities can be anything from a sophisticated, expensive television commercial or infomercial to someone walking around a busy shopping area with a sandwich board strapped to them that is promoting a product or service. Selling is what happens when you get the attention of a prospective buyer and they call you, walk into your store or visit your web site.

Myths About Selling

The idea of having to sell oneself is something that makes people uncomfortable for a variety of reasons. They don't understand what is involved. They incorrectly assume that they won't be any good at it. They perceive, again incorrectly, that because they're not salespeople, they can't do it. Finally, they have a completely false notion about what successful salespeople do.

The myth of the backslapping, loud, aggressive sales type is just that, a myth. When was the last time you bought something from someone like that? Successful salespeople are professionals who are well-trained, attend to the needs of their customers and are genuinely interested in helping them. They sell solutions to problems and products and services that satisfy a genuine need. Some of the most successful salespeople are quiet, unassuming people—not quite the stereotype often attached to salespeople. The main reason why they're successful is that they're sincere. Their customers pick up on that because sincerity can't be faked.

The average person may be nervous about selling oneself but shouldn't be for any of the preceding reasons. Nervousness arises because of unpreparedness. If you did a good job of defining exactly what you have to offer a potential customer or client, as explained in Part Two, you are ready. That's why so much emphasis was put on that whole process. You've done what the vast majority of people never do, i.e., take the time to identify their marketable skills. No wonder they're nervous. Intuitively, they know they're on shaky ground before they start.

Good salespeople are not born that way. They've been educated and trained by professionals and have lots of experience and you can be sure that they've fallen flat on their face in front of a customer or client on more than one occasion. Good salespeople have some characteristics in common with good athletes. They've developed the skills to be

successful but if they ever get complacent or lazy about keeping those skills sharp, they're in danger of getting their butt kicked.

They're also resilient. Every successful salesperson endures a lot of rejection before they get to a successful sale. Anyone who is easily discouraged and who can't regularly bounce back from disappointments will have a difficult time in sales.

Your selling challenge is to communicate to a potential employer or client how they can benefit from using the skills that you have already identified. Not in a fancy, forced or insincere way but in the way of having a normal conversation with someone.

What Makes You Different?

You already know the answer to that question. You know what your top five personal and career strengths are, your skills, values, the successes you've had and how companies and people have benefited from those successes. Before you meet with a potential employer or client, you need to give some thought to how your skills and successes can help them. So let's look at how you do that.

Preparing for an Interview or Meeting

Before you get in front of an employer or client, you've got some homework to do. You're half-ready at this point in that you know what your skills, strengths and successes are. Now you need to fill in the other side of the equation. How are those going to help this employer or client? You need to find out as much about them as you can by doing the following:

1. Study (not just look at) their web site, annual reports and any other material you can find on the company. If you show up for a meeting and ask questions that could easily have been answered by studying their web site, you're in

trouble. You don't deserve to get their business because you haven't prepared yourself for the meeting in a professional way.

2. Look at their competitor's web sites. You'll get a broader view of their industry this way and you may even get some ideas that they haven't thought of yet. You may also be able to access industry or association web sites for the particular sector that they are in and find out what the current issues and hot topics are for that sector.

3. Focus on the key issue that will determine whether or not you get hired or get their business, i.e., how can my skills, experience and successes help this company? Another way to look at that is to ask yourself, what value can I add to their operation?

The way professional salespeople are trained in this area is to get the customer focussed on the features and benefits of their product or service. Here's a feature of my product or service and here's how it can benefit you. You do the same thing. Here are my features and here's how they can help you.

Now you have a complete arsenal for success. You know what your key strengths are and you know how they can help the company. So what do you have to be nervous about? Nothing. Get in there and get the business.

The Marketing Metaphor

- Before you market, you must be clear on the qualities of your product and how it benefits the buyer.
- You must identify the market you want to go after.
- You must determine what marketing tools work best for you.

- You must continually hone your selling and marketing skills.

Ask any experienced contractor what their biggest challenge is and the odds are they will say marketing and selling their services. There is no one, proven way to do it. You have to use a variety of approaches and monitor the results to see what works and what doesn't work. Let's look at some of the marketing tools that you can use.

Marketing Tools

Advertising

Advertising is one of the most challenging issues that contractors have to deal with. It's also a challenge for large companies. Success in advertising is elusive and it's a moving target. Even if something works once, there's no guarantee that it will work the next time you try it. There's no one way to do it. Some successful contractors never advertise in the conventional sense but you can bet that they are always very alert to any opportunity to market themselves. You can also bet that they have an effective network and are well informed about what is going on in their field and in the industries that they want to penetrate.

Other contractors who have impressive resumes, brochures, web sites and other marketing materials and who regularly spend money on advertising may be struggling. One of the most frustrating things about advertising is that there is no guarantee when you spend your money on it that it will work. You only find out after you have tried it. If you run an ad in a trade journal for example and you don't get a single call from it, you can't ask for your money back, it doesn't work that way.

Nevertheless, you have to do it. The big question is, how? You may feel you have a great deal to offer to your clients but that means nothing unless you can get their attention and convince them to buy your services. Most of us learn how to do this by trial and error and the commercial graveyard is full of great ideas and products that never made it.

So, somehow you have to advertise your services to the world. How you do it, what will work and what is affordable given your limited funds to spend on it, are all issues you will have to address. Fortunately, there are some guidelines to follow that will increase your chances of success.

Design an Advertising Plan

Before you grapple with all of the options that are available to you, there are some basics that you need to be very clear on.

Who are Your Potential Customers?

How well do you know the market you are targeting? Who, typically would make the decision to buy your services or hire you? What print material do they read? What associations do they belong to? What trade shows are they likely to attend? What are their purchasing criteria and options? If you were in their shoes, what is it that you're offering them that will get their attention? What problem do they have that you are going to solve? As one wag put it, "look for their pain".

If you are sending marketing material to them via regular mail or e-mail, make sure that it is addressed to the individual that you are targeting and not to some generic title like "President". It will take time to find out who these people are but it's time well spent versus taking the generic approach which rarely works.

What Value are You Offering?

How are you going to solve their problem and how does that compare to the options that they can get elsewhere? The key here is to be sure that your skill set is a good match for the types of challenges your customers are likely to face in their industry and since you've done your homework you will be comfortable knowing that you're targeting people who are a potentially good match.

What is so unique or special about your offer that will get their attention? Are the benefits of your service clearly spelled out or are they implied in broad generalizations?

How Much Will You Charge?

You can be sure that this will be a factor in the decision to purchase or not. How will the potential client know that they're getting good value for what they're buying? Remember that value is not all about pricing, if it was, the only stores that would be around would be discount stores.

Your marketing material must emphasize that your pricing is competitive, that you have proven skills that they can access, that you are genuinely interested in helping them and that you will back up any claims that you're making about what you will deliver.

Spread Out Your Funds

Don't blow all of your advertising budget on one event. Be selective and design an advertising plan with several options. As you try each one, monitor the results and learn from the experience. Always track where your success is coming from. Ask people who call you how they heard about you and modify your plan to focus on the areas that work. Don't panic when things don't work out as well as you'd like them to. Large companies with years of experience in advertising go through that too.

Build Customer Loyalty

Once you have a client, make sure that they're happy with your service. Even if the contract is for a short period of time and not worth a lot of money to you, treat the client the same way you would if it were a long-term, lucrative contract. You never know where any given contract is going to lead. A satisfied client is your most powerful marketing tool if you know how to use it and you use it wisely.

A good time to ask a client if they know of any other

companies that could also benefit from your services is when you get positive feedback from them. People who are new to contracting are sometimes reluctant or shy about asking for referrals. There's no need to feel that way. If you approach them in a polite, businesslike way, they will be happy to refer you to other potential clients.

There are many sophisticated advertising and marketing techniques available but nothing works better than "word of mouth". If you have happy clients, you can bet that the word will get around, even so, don't forget to give them a gentle nudge just to be sure that it does.

Finally, there's a fundamental fact that if you are new and even if you are prepared to spend significant funds on advertising, success comes slowly. It takes time to get established and to build credibility in the marketplace. That's easy to say but not so easy to swallow when you're investing your time and money trying to get yourself established and things aren't moving as fast as you would like them to.

There's an old maxim that comes from the *I Ching*. "Grow slow and send your roots deep". That's good advice to follow.

Getting Publicity

As a self-employed contractor, you may not see any connection between publicity and your work. You may be surprised at the opportunities that exist for you to get some publicity. It's not just world leaders, sports stars and celebrities that the media report on, they also write about ordinary people and events going on in the community.

Most newspapers have a regular section on new businesses that are starting up in their area and they often provide a free service to announce this. Check out both the main and community newspapers in your area to see if they have such a service and if they do, be sure to get yourself included in it when you start up.

If you belong to an association, they often make similar announcements about their members in their monthly newsletter, so again, make sure that you get your service noticed when you start up. This might prompt a call from people that you haven't heard from in a long time.

While getting publicity is new territory for contractors and learning how to use it is a challenge, it can be a fun thing to do. It's your chance to let your hair down and show how creative you can be. Here are some ideas to get you going.

Professional and Community Associations

If you belong to groups like this and you're not on the executive committee, find a way to get on it. If you don't belong to any groups, you should look around to see what's out there and join any that you can make a contribution to and at the same time, spread the word about your services. This is a win-win situation for you and the group that you join. You're making a genuine contribution to their cause and increasing your profile at the same time. You will find that successful contractors use this strategy effectively to market their services.

If there's something unique about what you do, that could be newsworthy if you contact the right people, reporters or publishers. If you have solved a problem for a client that was significant and it has application to other companies, don't keep that information to yourself, get the word out there.

Participating in trade shows and events in your community can be an inexpensive and effective way of marketing your services. You don't have to have a large display at a major trade show to do this. Look for community events, chambers of commerce and other professional/business groups who are putting on events that might be a good chance for you to advertise and do some networking.

You might want to make something happen in your community by spearheading a fund-raising event. Be the

primary participant in it or align yourself with a professional/business or volunteer organization to achieve something along these lines. How about organizing a raffle to raise funds for a worthy cause? Or donating a prize or an award to some deserving individual or group in your community?

If what you do is connected to a national trend or an area of community interest, how about writing an article about it and sending it to your local newspaper or other media outlet? If you are knowledgeable in an area that the public knows little about or could benefit from, share that knowledge with your community.

You may also want to impart this knowledge by offering yourself as a speaker at a monthly meeting of a business or volunteer group in your community. These groups are always looking for speakers of interest.

Maybe there's an opportunity for you to start up a new group in your community with you as the first president. How about an association of self-employed contractors that provides a forum for these people to share their experiences with their peers?

Get Others to Promote Your Business

Large companies spend a lot of time and resources on database marketing and other sophisticated marketing techniques to get the maximum return from one of their most valuable assets, their existing customers. On a smaller and simpler scale you can do that too.

We've already touched on the importance of getting referrals from your customers. They can help you in other ways too and most of them will as long as you approach them in a discreet way and pick the right time to do it. Just don't be pushy or insensitive about this area or it will backfire on you. Here are some ways that a happy customer can help you.

Even better than a simple referral where the customer

gives you the name of one of their contacts, is for them to introduce you to the contact. That sets a very positive tone for you to do business.

Perhaps your customer belongs to a group or an association that you would like to belong to but can't get into without a sponsor or an invitation to join from an existing member. The first step would be to join your customer as their guest to their monthly meeting.

If they really appreciate your services, they may even be willing to promote you in some way. You could get a notice in their company newsletter or the newsletter of a professional association that they belong to.

If you have brochures or other promotional material about your services, they may agree to display this information in a conspicuous area on their premises. You may simply give them some extra business cards of yours to pass around.

No matter what type of help you get from a customer, make a point of thanking them and maybe offer a simple gift or other token of your appreciation. Also make sure that they know that you will promote their business any time you find an opportunity to do so.

Social Marketing

If the service you offer could benefit a volunteer or charitable group that you admire and respect, consider offering your services to them for free or at a generous discount from what you normally charge. You have to be sincere and sensitive in your approach to them and not come across as self-promoting or trying to capitalize on their visibility in the community.

Handled properly, this can be an effective way for you to raise your profile in your community. There are probably groups that you share common beliefs and values with that would be grateful to receive some type of non-monetory assistance from you.

Look around you and you will see lots of examples of these types of strategic, win-win relationships between volunteers and charitable groups and large and small businesses, as well as prominent people in the community who lend their names to help organizations to promote their services and raise funds. There is probably an opportunity for you to do that too.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing is a legitimate way to market products and services by mass-mailing promotional material and some companies do nothing else but direct marketing on behalf of clients. It's not a good way for you to go though. Your approach should always be a targeted one and not a shotgun approach, which direct marketing often is. It makes sense for some companies to get into mass-mailing but it doesn't make sense for you.

The only exception to this will be if the service you offer has great potential for a particular sector of industry and there are a lot of companies in that sector in your area. Even so, you still want to make sure that your material is going to a specific individual and is not addressed to a title in a company. You should also test that sector with a small sample and see what type of results you get before committing to a larger mailing.

Multiply Yourself

One of the more common mistakes made by people who are new to contracting is putting all of their employment options into one basket. This leads to erratic cash flow and the ups and downs of operating this way are hard to deal with psychologically. You need to generate as many potential revenue streams as you can.

Most people, if they put their minds to it, can find more

than one way to sell and apply their skill set. Successful contractors always have several sources of revenue and they are always cultivating them and looking for new areas where they can apply their skill set.

The payback from the various options is not always equal. It's more common to have a range of potential revenue, depending on where and how you are selling your skill set. That's not a bad thing. It's better to be busy and making some money than to be idle, waiting for a lucrative contract.

Not all activities can be evaluated strictly on the amount of money that you get directly from that source. For example, teaching part-time at a college or university or in the private sector can be a very effective way for you to raise your profile in the community and market your services. You won't get rich on what you earn from teaching but it can be a good way to network and pick up some business.

If you have a skill set that is unique or that can help people or businesses, consider putting together a seminar. You can do this on your own or in conjunction with a college, university or a professional association. The financial return will be higher than teaching a regular course at college or university and you will have a better chance of picking up some business from those who attend.

Accounting, engineering and other professional services companies may be good areas for you to target. A lot of their work is project-oriented and they often find themselves short-staffed and in need of temporary help.

If you belong to a professional organization, take advantage of the employment services that most of them offer to their members. Get to know the people who run it and keep in regular contact with them.

Your Communications Network

Your communications network is a fancy way of describing the methods you provide to the world to contact you and the

impression that they get when they do try to contact you. Some people unwittingly make it hard for potential clients to reach them or they are sloppy about the way they respond to inquiries. Here are some suggestions for you to consider:

- If someone is trying to contact you, you need to know right away so you can get back to them quickly. Cell phones and pagers are most commonly used for this. If you don't respond quickly to inquiries, you may find that the prospect has found someone else by the time you do get back to them. You will be putting a lot of effort into trying to get prospects to call you. Don't blow your chances of getting their business by not responding to them as quickly as you can.

- If you work from home and your telephone line is the primary means of contact be aware if you are tying up the line by being on the Internet or making a lot of calls. A prospect should never get a busy signal if they are calling you. At the very least, they should get a businesslike response that says you're temporarily tied up but you will get back to them shortly. If they do get a busy signal, or if you don't get back to them right away, you may well lose their business.

- Fax machines are intended to be available at any time, unattended. Make sure that yours is.

- Watch how you respond to calls, especially if you operate from your home. Always assume that the call is a business call and respond appropriately.

- Check your e-mail regularly and respond to inquiries immediately.

All of the communications tools that you need to look like a professional are readily available today from telecommunications providers. It is imperative that you know what these tools are, what they can do for you and that you avail yourself of them to project a consistent, professional image.

Resumes and Marketing Materials

Resumes

There is a wide range of opinions on the effectiveness of a resume as a marketing tool when looking for work and even more opinions on what it should look like. You can purchase any number of books today on how to create an effective resume while some commentators suggest that you throw away your resume and get out and bang on doors and network like crazy.

There is no one, simple tool to describe yourself or one, simple way to look for work. You should have a number of tools and use them interchangeably depending on what your objective is at any given time. A historical, chronological resume may be appropriate if you are applying for a job where the skills required are a close match to what you have to offer. It is not an effective tool if you are targeting prospective companies looking for contract work.

Many people make the mistake of trying to come up with one, perfect resume. Since your resume should be targeted to the needs of the company that you are contacting, it should highlight the strengths that you have that match that company's needs.You need to select from the skill set you have to offer and the skills that are appropriate for that company and design your resume accordingly.

That doesn't mean a complete rewrite of your resume for every company that you apply to, it just means making some modifications to it to emphasize your most marketable skills that will appeal to them. The standard software that comes with today's PC allows you to make these modifications fairly easily.

In today's workplace, decision makers are more interested in the skills you have to offer and can apply as soon as you walk in the door rather than broad generalizations about what you have done in the past. Just like a good brochure or marketing

document, the resume you are preparing at any given time should anticipate the needs of the company you are targeting and focus on how your skills and experience can help them.

Today's resume must be much more marketing oriented than resumes of the past. It's primary function is to generate enough interest in you and what you can do for the company you're contacting, so they will pick up the telephone and call you.

Many current resumes are attuned to yesterday's workplace and are therefore ineffective. What can you do for me today? That's what decision makers want to know. Not what your title was in your last job or what you've been doing for the past twenty years. The emphasis must be on what you are and what you can do for that company.

The layout and presentation must be professional looking. Use white, letter quality paper only, no coloured paper or expensive paper that would be more appropriate for a wedding invitation. Any spelling errors or typos will probably guarantee that it will go directly into the garbage.

Use a laser printer and make sure that the layout, spacing, use of different fonts, etc., give it a professional look. The criteria is to produce a businesslike document that shows that you took some care in creating it. That won't guarantee you anything of course, it's just the minimum standard you have to meet.

If you send out a resume that looks like a copy of a copy that was run off on a corner grocery store's photocopier, with the printing not properly lined up and maybe some toner marks on it, there's a good chance it will go directly into the garbage. Why would anyone want to hire someone who was that careless about the way they were presenting themselves? The tool that you use should reflect how you see yourself and what you have to offer.

You should also be able to respond immediately if you get a response to your resume. If you suddenly get a telephone call

about a resume that you sent out some time ago, will you be ready to respond in a way that confidently backs up what it says or would you be caught flat-footed and mumble some weak response?

The product you are selling is you and it is imperative that you take time to internalize your vision of yourself and to make sure that it is consistent with the picture you are painting with your resume and other marketing materials you use to market yourself.

The following examples show different ways to portray the same individual.

A Traditional Resume
Example One

Joseph A. Flynn

1695 Edgewater Street
North Vancouver, B.C.
V7N 4M8

Telephone: (604) 985-8881
Fax: (604) 985-9999
E-mail: jaf@direct.ca

Education
Master of Science, Applied Mathematics, UBC
Bachelor of Science, Applied Mathematics, SFU
Many IT courses from IBM, Microsoft and other major IT vendors

Career History
Urban Enterprises, Victoria, B.C., 1995–2000
Director, Technical Services

Responsible for a team of 15 IT professionals in a centralized IT department with an annual budget of $2 million. Successfully met all user department's needs for information retrieval from a corporate database and supported their staff in all IT functions.

Mercantile Fund, Vancouver, B.C., 1990–1995
Manager, Information Services

Provided support and leadership to 250 IT users throughout the organization while managing 12 IT professionals.

High-Tech Consulting, Vancouver, B.C., 1983–1990
Systems Analyst

After starting as a junior programmer, I worked my way up to a Systems Analyst position, where I worked on projects to meet the overall IT needs of the organization.

B.C. Lumber, Vancouver, B.C., 1980–1983
Documentation Analyst

Responsible for the compilation and recording of various corporate reports.

Hobbies: Fishing, golfing and gardening

References will be supplied on request

Comments

This is typical of a resume that would have been acceptable in yesterday's workplace. The layout, spacing and use of fonts make it easy to read. If it was being submitted in response to an advertisement for a full-time job and if the applicant's experience is a close match for the position being advertised, it may get a positive response.

The individual's experience is presented in a very general way and there is no indication of what their achievements have been and how those helped the companies that they have been with. Hobbies should be left out as should the part about references will be supplied since it is redundant.

This resume is inappropriate if it were being used to find contract work in today's market. It is not marketing oriented at all and gives no indication of the individual's strengths.

A Traditional Resume
Example Two
Page 1

Joseph A. Flynn

1695 Edgewater Street
North Vancouver, B.C.
V7N 4M8

Telephone: (604) 985-8881
Fax: (604) 985-9999
E-mail: jaf@direct.ca

A highly competent Information Technology executive with over 15 years' experience in different industries. Expertise in corporate systems planning, project management and network and operating system architecture. Skilled in working with and in training non-IT managers and their staff.

Accomplishments

Managed and contributed to the development of a LAN network to meet the strategic needs of a marketing organization.

Managed the conversion of a custom software information system to a UNIXsystem for a financial company while meeting their ongoing daily IT needs.

Trained and managed 250 IT users during a major conversion of an outdated MIS system.

Achieved a 25% savings in IT costs by streamlining inefficient methodologies used by IT and user staff.

Worked with a group of senior managers to redefine the MIS system to produce more timely and relevant reports for managers and user personnel.

Planned, implemented and documented systems and procedures for a disaster recovery plan to ensure the stability of an MIS system.

Developed, implemented and taught an information systems management course for non-IT users to increase their awareness and comfort level with MIS systems.

Career History
Urban Enterprises, Victoria B.C., 1995–2000
Director, Technical Services

Responsible for a team of 15 IT professionals in a centralized department with an annual budget of $2 million. Successfully met all user department's needs for information retrieval from a corporate database and supported and trained their staff in all IT functions.

Mercantile Fund, Vancouver, B.C., 1990–1995
Manager, Information Services

Provided support and leadership to 250 IT users throughout the organization while managing 12 IT professionals.

High-Tech Consulting, Vancouver, B.C., 1983–1990
Systems Analyst

After starting as a junior programmer, I worked my way up to the Systems Analyst position, where I worked on projects to meet the overall IT needs of the organization.

B.C. Lumber, Vancouver, B.C., 1980–1983
Documentation Analyst

Responsible for the compilation and recording of various corporate reports.

Education
Master of Science, Applied Mathematics, UBC
Bachelor of Science, Applied Mathematics, SFU
Many IT courses from IBM, Microsoft and other major IT vendors.

Comments

This is an improvement over the previous example as it is more marketing oriented. Right at the beginning we get a snapshot of who the individual is, their experience and an indication of the skill set that they have to offer.

This is followed by the most important part of the resume, i.e., what the individual has accomplished in their career and how they helped the companies and people that they have worked with. This is the section that you would modify. Select and highlight the strengths that would be of most interest to the company that you are targeting at any given time.

Achievements are followed by a brief but adequate description of the person's work experience. You can elaborate on this all you want when you get in front of the decision maker. You may want to have a more detailed version of your work history available in case they would like to see that.

Educational qualifications are at the end and that's where they should be shown.

The Twenty-First Century Resume

The Format

1. Your Name

2. Your Profile

3. Your Accomplishments

4. Your Career History

5. Your Education

6. Your Address & Contact Information

Comments

Your resume should consist of one page only. Everything of importance that you need to say can easily be accommodated on one page. Don't forget, you can elaborate all you want when the company you're targeting calls you and sets up a meeting.

1. At the beginning, show your name only.

2. In your profile, give a succinct, proactive description of who you are, your experience and an indication of your skill set. Sample profiles are given later in the book.

3. From the accomplishments in your career, select and highlight those which will be of most interest to the company that you are sending your resume to. Emphasize how your accomplishments helped the companies and people you have worked with.

4. In your career history, show the companies that you worked for, your title and the years you were there. Also include their web site address. This makes it easy for anyone who is not familiar with the company to get a quick overview.

5. Show your education, including degrees, diplomas, etc.

6. Show your address and your contact information.

Twenty-First Century Resume Example

Joseph A. Flynn

A highly competent Information Technology executive with over 15 years' experience in different industries. Expertise in corporate systems planning, project management and network and operating systems architecture. Skilled in working with and in training non-IT managers and their staff.

Accomplishments

Trained and managed 250 IT users during a major conversion of an outdated MIS system.

Achieved a 25% savings in IT costs by streamlining inefficient methodologies used by IT and user staff.

Worked with a group of senior managers to redefine the MIS system to produce more timely and relevant reports for managers and user personnel.

Planned, implemented and documented systems and procedures for a disaster recovery plan to ensure the stability of an MIS system.

Developed and taught a course for IT professionals to help them better understand the needs and challenges of non-IT users of MIS systems.

Worked with a group of marketing professionals to develop a corporate web site to facilitate inquiries from customers about the company's products and services.

Career History

Urban Enterprises, Victoria, B.C., 1995–2000 www.uei.com
Director, Technical Services

Mercantile Fund, Vancouver, B.C., 1990–1995 www.mfc.ca
Manager, Information Services

High-Tech Consulting, Vancouver, B.C., 1983–1990 www.htc.com
Systems Analyst

B.C. Lumber, Vancouver, B.C., 1980–1983 www.bcl.ca
Documentation Analyst

Education

Master of Science, Applied Mathematics, UBC
Bachelor of Science, Applied Mathematics, SFU
Many IT courses from IBM, Microsoft and other major IT vendors

1695 Edgewater Street, North Vancouver, B.C. V7N 4M8
Phone: (604) 985-8881, Fax: (604) 985-9999, E-mail: jaf@direct.ca

Sample Profiles

A communications professional experienced in advertising, marketing and corporate communications. Strong computer skills include expertise in most current business software on both MAC and PC systems.

A high-energy senior contracts and purchasing professional with skills in customer service, problem solving, negotiation, computer applications and the ability to build positive relationships with internal customers, contractors and vendors.

A practical, hands-on and action-oriented individual who enjoys working in a dynamic technical environment. A mechanical engineer and MBA graduate with demonstrated leadership, strategic planning and decision-making skills and a reputation for coaching and developing people while delivering profitable results.

A marketing and communications professional experienced in the consumer and business product and service environments with a proven record of satisfying business objectives in the most cost efficient and effective manner.

A highly competent Information Technology executive with 24 years experience including corporate systems planning, technical and development project management and network and operating system architecture. Skilled in delivering enterprise systems solutions while building and motivating teams with diverse technical expertise.

An action-oriented financial executive who thrives on developing and executing corporate finance strategies to maximize shareholder value. Adept at developing effective organizations, championing change and motivating strong

employee performance.

A financial management graduate with a keen interest and experience in Internet commerce. Speaks the language of today's IT personnel but relates primarily to the needs of the customers who use IT systems.

A fine arts graduate with excellent communications skills who is equally comfortable in working on assignments independently or as part of a team. Current computer skills complement an interest and track record in the creative application of computer technology to achieve business objectives in the design of web sites and other marketing materials.

A civil engineer with a record of achieving results working with teams of technical and non-technical people on a wide range of construction-related projects. A hands-on achiever who needs little or no supervision. Comfortable in dealing with senior managers, trades people and other professionals. Experienced in current IT applications and project-management software.

Cover Letters

Never, ever send out a resume without a well thought out and complementary cover letter to go with it. The format is one page and a short one page at that. It must be very marketing oriented. Its objective is to get the recipient interested enough in you to go on and read your resume.

To do that it must clearly address the needs of the individual and company you are sending it to and further indicate that you can help them with those needs. It should quickly establish the fact that you know something about the company and their industry. A generic, vague cover letter will

invariably go straight to the garbage along with the resume.

Here are some things to consider:

- If you have any doubts whatsoever about the spelling of the individual's or company name that you are sending your resume to, make sure that you get both of them right before you send it off.
- Does the letter convey a clear message that you can help this company and contribute to their bottom line?
- Make sure that it conveys the fact that you know something about the company and the industry that they're in.
- Make sure that the content is positive and upbeat.
- Make sure that it complements what you are saying in your resume.

The cover letter on the following page is designed to go with the Twenty-First Century Resume that was illustrated earlier.

Sample Cover Letter

Date: -------

Dear ----------

In my career as an Information Technology manager, I sometimes found myself short of experienced people when trying to meet the requirements of the various projects I was managing at any given time. My budget did not give me the option of hiring experienced contractors through large consulting companies.

I'm aware that you have several large projects coming up and if they present a staffing problem for you, I may be able to help you. As an independent contractor, my rates are affordable and I can offer you a diverse set of current IT skills on a part-time or full-time basis. As you will see in the attached resume, I have extensive experience working with non-IT personnel from senior managers to clerical staff. I relate well to their needs and challenges in working with MIS systems.

I work equally well in a team environment or on my own and I have extensive project management experience. If you could use a hands-on IT professional who will produce results right from the beginning, I would like to hear from you.

I will follow up with you by telephone within a week. If you would like to contact me in the meantime, please call me at 985-8881 or e-mail me at jaf@direct.ca.

Sincerely,

Joe Flynn

Marketing Letters

A good marketing letter can be an effective way of getting a decision maker's attention or arousing their curiosity. All decision makers/business owners are interested in increasing sales, decreasing expenses and making their operations more efficient, so focus on those areas.

You may have some expertise or experience operating in an area that they couldn't otherwise afford to hire on a permanent basis. You may also be valuable in a strategic role working with the president or business owner or as a mentor to some of their younger, inexperienced staff.

As part of your requirement to be "connected" to what is going on in industry, be on the lookout for news about companies who are expanding, restructuring or who you deem may benefit from your expertise. Find out who the decision maker is and send them a marketing letter. Follow these guidelines:

- ✦ Keep it to one page.
- ✦ Get directly to your expertise and how it may benefit them.
- ✦ Omit any small talk.
- ✦ Focus on their needs, not yours.
- ✦ If you have accomplished something in your career that you think would be of interest to them and would have some application in their operation, highlight it.
- ✦ Your age is not important. Keep the focus on what you have accomplished in your career.
- ✦ Don't specify your rates but emphasize that they are

affordable and cost-effective.

- Emphasize how flexible you are in terms of working part-time, full-time or on any terms that suit their needs.

- Emphasize that you are a pragmatic, roll-up-your-sleeves type who will work with them to implement whatever changes are required versus a consultant who writes reports about what should be done.

- Offer to meet with them, with no strings attached, to explore how your skill set may be of benefit to them.

- Say you will follow up within a week and do so.

Spend some time on marketing letters. They can open up doors for you and are worth the investment of your time to get proficient at them.

Sample Marketing Letter

Date: ---------

Dear ----------

In my career as an Information Technology manager, I sometimes found myself short of experienced people when trying to meet the requirements of the various projects I was managing at any given time. My budget did not give me the option of hiring experienced people from large consulting companies.

I'm aware that you have several large projects coming up and if staffing them is a problem for you, I may be able to help you. As an independent contractor, I can offer you very attractive rates and I will work with you in any time frame that makes sense for you.

I can offer you a diverse set of current IT skills with application in a wide area. I'm equally comfortable working on my own or in a team and I have an extensive background in project management, including experience in your industry.

I can operate at the detailed, technical level and can also contribute to the development of strategic plans to enhance the effectiveness of MIS systems. I relate well to both IT and non-IT staff, from clerical staff to senior managers.

I noticed on your web site that you have undertaken a program to upgrade the IT skills of your staff throughout the organization. I successfully designed and implemented a similar program for one of my clients and upgraded the IT skills of 250 of their staff. If appropriate, I would be happy to work with you on that program.

I will follow up with you by telephone within a week. If you would like to contact me in the meantime, please do so at 985-8881 or by e-mail at jaf@direct.ca.

Sincerely,

Joe Flynn

Brochures

If you are going to operate as a contractor, a tool that you should seriously consider using is a brochure that describes you and the services you offer. Most people will benefit from the time and money spent on developing an effective brochure for the following reasons:

- By having a brochure, you immediately look like a contractor.

  The exercise of creating a brochure is beneficial to you psychologically in that it forces you to nail down exactly what you have to offer and the benefits. You will feel more confident about yourself as a result of the exercise and you will have brochures readily available to market yourself.

- You will make it easier for the promoters in your network or existing clients to help you to promote your business if they have some of your brochures to hand out to anyone in their network who they feel should know about you. Distribute them along with a cover letter to your network of contacts as soon as you create them.

- Your brochure should look professional and must be specific about what you have to offer and how that benefits potential clients. You should be able to identify these things on both sides of a standard envelope-sized card stock that is available from printers or office supplies stores. Do not spend a lot of money to produce a glossy, multicoloured brochure that isn't necessary. The primary requirements are that it is simple, specific and that it looks professional.

- Your brochure is very similar to your marketing letter. You

are stating the same information in a different format. Make sure that you emphasize your willingness to meet with clients, with no strings attached, to see if you can help them. Ask them to contact you by telephone or e-mail to set up an appointment. Emphasize also that you are a hands-on professional who will work with them to implement whatever changes are required to improve their operation. Finally, always carry your brochures with you and be ready to distribute them along with your well-rehearsed description of what you are all about.

The following sample is intended to give you the gist of how to produce a brochure. In reality, it is what you would give to a printer or graphic designer, who could dress it up and create a professional-looking brochure.

Sample Brochure
Side One

Joseph A. Flynn, M.Sc.

An experienced & accomplished Information Technology professional with an extensive background in project management who is ready to help you to meet your short- and long-term IT needs.

Do you have an IT project that you need help with but can't hire any more full-time staff?

Do you need an IT professional but can't afford to hire one from the large consulting companies?

Could some of your IT staff benefit from some training to improve their communications skills and working relationships with non-IT personnel?

Do you have an IT project that you have been putting off because you don't have an experienced manager to handle it?

Do you need help with some IT applications conversion or upgrading?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, I can help you to meet your needs at rates you can afford. I'm a hands-on achiever with a strong record in successful project management.

You can reach me at:

985-8881 or

jaf@direct.ca
Joseph A. Flynn, M.Sc.

Side Two

Sample Projects

Managed and contributed to the development of a LAN network to meet the strategic needs of a large marketing organization.

Trained and managed 250 IT users during a major conversion of an outdated MIS system.

Achieved a 25% savings in IT costs by streamlining inefficient systems and procedures used by IT and user staff.

Developed and taught a course for IT personnel to help them better understand the needs and challenges of non-IT users of MIS systems.

Worked with a group of marketing professionals to develop a corporate web site to facilitate inquiries about the company's products and services.

Worked with a group of senior managers to redefine the MIS system to produce more timely and relevant reports for managers and user personnel.

Planned, implemented and documented systems and pocedures for a disaster recovery plan to ensure the stability of an MIS system.

I will be happy to meet with you, at no expense or obligation to you, to discuss how I may be able to help you with your IT needs.

985-8881 or

jaf@direct.ca

Getting Organized

Given all of the alternatives that you have for marketing your services, a planned approach to what you want to achieve each week is advisable. The key items you must focus on are:

- Finding prospects. A prospect is a decision maker or business owner who knows what you do and has expressed enough interest to meet with you.

- Getting contracts. A contract is an agreement to pay for your services that accepts your financial terms, when you will be paid, what you will deliver and when you will deliver it.

- Expanding your network, especially your promoters.

- Finding good target markets for future prospects.

Set weekly goals for each of these but be flexible, especially if you are new to contracting. Keep a record of what you are doing, what is working and what isn't.

Be careful not to let favourite or easy activities dominate your time. Sending out letters is easier than focussing on finding prospects by telephone or in person but you know which one of these activities will determine your success or failure.

Monitor the progress of each of your prospects and always be clear on what the next step is to move it along to completion.

Continually pick the brains of successful contractors you know and follow their advice and examples for success.

Finally, stay flexible. While planning and organizing your time is very important, things rarely work out exactly as you think they will and successful contractors will all tell you that

everything takes longer than you thought it would. So stay loose and roll with the punches that you can be sure will come your way.

Following is a "Weekly Action Plan", a tool that you may find useful for monitoring and evaluating your marketing activities

Weekly Action Plan for week _____

Check When Done	Actions Planned	Phone Contacts Made	Brochures/ Letters Sent	Marketing Letters Sent	Additions to your Network	Prospects	Contracts
	Monday						
	Tuesday						
	Wednesday						
	Thursday						
	Friday						
Weekend							
Ideas for Next Week							

Networking Do's & Don'ts

There's probably no other word that is used more frequently in relation to today's workplace and that is more abused, misunderstood and overused than networking. That's unfortunate because if you understand what networking is really all about and you're prepared to invest the time it takes to put an effective network together, it is probably the most powerful tool you can use to market yourself and find those hidden work opportunities that were discussed in Part One.

Successful contractors always have an effective network and they are always cultivating and expanding it. But it took them years to put it together and that's the first lesson to learn. If you think that you're going to quickly create an effective network by attending as many meetings and so-called networking events as you can, you're kidding yourself, it doesn't work that way.

You need to develop a networking strategy that works for you and gradually build up your network. You've seen the people who race around trade shows, meetings and other events frantically handing out their business cards and collecting as many as they can lay their hands on. So they end up with a fistful of business cards and think they've done a great job of networking. The question is, what are they going to do with all of those cards that they've collected? In reality, probably nothing. From a networking point of view, they're worthless.

If you attend a lot of networking events but don't have a good reason to be there, the odds are you won't connect with any people that you would want on your network but you may well get hustled by people who want to sell you something.

If you are selective about the events that you attend, and you need to be, networking will happen naturally. You shouldn't be there unless the event is about an area that you're interested in or would like to learn more about. Under those circumstances, you are more likely to meet people with similar

interests and have a normal conversation with them. That's what networking is about.

So let's first make sure that you understand what effective networking is.

I'm Uncomfortable Doing It

If you're uncomfortable networking you're not doing it right or your motives are wrong. Remember our earlier discussion about selling yourself and why so many people are uncomfortable with it? Many of the same things apply here. If you're picking someone's brains for purely selfish reasons, you should be uncomfortable with that. On the other hand, if you are exchanging information with them, that's quite different.

If they are well-informed about an area that you would like to know more about and you acknowledge their expertise and politely request their assistance and they agree to share some of their knowledge with you, there's no reason for you to be uncomfortable. You approached them openly and honestly and they responded positively.

It's okay to be a bit uncomfortable with networking until you really understand how it works but have no delusions about its importance. There are no successful contractors who don't have an effective network, so it's a skill that you will have to develop.

It's ironic that some people who are shy about networking are always willing to help others who are seeking out their advice or trying to learn something about an area that they're very familiar with. When the situation is reversed, they suddenly become uneasy and feel that they are imposing on people.

Promoters and Supporters

As you start to build up your network, approach people who you know initially and build up your confidence gradually.

Promoters and supporters are terms used to classify people in your network. Supporters are your family, friends and people that you have worked with in the past. Promoters are people who you know are well-connected to what is going on. Both types are important but the more promoters you get to know, the more successful you will be.

Most people are very sloppy about networking and that's one reason for their discomfort. Make it easy for people to help you. Take the time to explain to them what it is you're looking for. Make sure that they have copies of your brochure or your twenty-first century resume. That way if they think of someone they know who could help you, all they have to do is give them one of your brochures or pop your resume in the fax machine.

The clearer the picture your contacts have about you and what you're looking for, the higher the probability that they will think of you if they run across someone who may benefit from using your skills.

Everybody has a network but when we attempt to document it, we have a tendency to be too narrow. Be as broad as you can when defining your network. Don't just include obvious choices like close business associates and friends. Include people from groups that you belong to now or have belonged to in the past. Alumni associations, professional and industry associations, former competitors, customers, co-workers, bosses and people you have managed should be included. Sports clubs or community or volunteer associations that you belong to as well as cultural, arts or religious groups are also helpful.

Network with a Purpose in Mind

Here are some ideas to keep in mind as you network:

- Try to expand your awareness of what is going on in the workplace. Be politely aggressive when soliciting

information about things that are taking place. Who is expanding and hiring or who is leaving, possibly opening up an opportunity for you.

- ✦ Get the names of key contacts. As long as you are discreet and assure people that you will be professional and polite in approaching any people they know, they'll probably give you some names.

- ✦ If the timing seems right and you know the person well enough, ask them if they would mind introducing you to some of their key contacts.

- ✦ Ask for advice. If you're talking to someone who you know is well-connected, ask them how they would go about networking if they were in your shoes.

- ✦ Always be ready to network. Never go anywhere without your brochures and be ready to give a short, proactive description of what you are doing and what you are looking for.

- ✦ Finally, always make a point of thanking anyone who helps you and get into the habit of thinking, is there any way I can help the person who is helping me? As you get better at being connected to what is going on, be on the lookout for information that, while it may not help you, could be useful to someone in your network and be sure to pass it along. Good networkers are always sharing information with their contacts.

Networking Tips & Pointers

Definitions:

- ✦ Networking is really just talking to someone who can give

you ideas, opinions, names and advice. It is not selling but it is an opportunity to create a positive impression.

- Networking is a professional interaction, not a desperate plea for help.

- Don't worry about immediate results. People are very impatient when they are networking. If they don't walk away from a meeting or event with immediate results, they think they've failed. Just focus on building up your network and the results will come in good time.

- The trick is to build up your network when you don't need it. If you land a nice contract, don't get complacent about networking. Keep at it and expand it and nurture the contacts in your network.

- Don't abuse your network. Sometimes when business is slow there's a tendency to panic and get aggressive with your contacts. That will come back to haunt you. Keep your approach low-key and pace yourself and things will work out.

- Be prepared for networking. You spent a lot of time in Part Two defining your strengths and marketable skills. Part of the reason for doing that was to prepare you for effective networking. Be ready at any time to give a short, proactive description of what you do and what you're looking for.

- There are actually people out there who enjoy helping other people, just for the sake of helping them. That's something to keep in mind if you're nervous about networking.

- People who have just landed a new job or lucrative

contract could be good targets for you to network with. They must have been active networkers themselves and their contact information should be fresh. They can also empathize with your situation.

- Some people love to be asked for advice. It strokes their ego and makes them feel good.

- Be yourself. A common mistake made by people who are new to networking is that they think they have to become great communicators or salespeople. Just act naturally. If you are a low-key type, that's fine, good listeners make good networkers.

- Connect to your passion. Attend events that feature areas that are of interest to you and you won't have any problem talking to people.

Using the Internet

In today's workplace, the Internet is an essential and invaluable source when looking for work opportunities and for keeping abreast of what is going on in the world. It is mandatory that you know how to do basic research on the Internet.

E-mail is no longer an option. It is every bit as important as the telephone and in some areas of business it is more important. Make sure that your e-mail address is on every piece of marketing material you produce.

When approaching the Internet as a research tool, think of yourself as a prospector looking for gold dust. Sure a gold nugget now and then would be wonderful but if you approach your search expecting to find nuggets, you'll be disappointed.

Just like the prospector, don't expect the gold dust to come easy either. You'll have to shovel your way through some data before you find what you're looking for and you will have to use

your creativity too.

Any research librarian will tell you that the good information is hidden and you have to be aggressive and diligent to find it. If you're not comfortable with doing basic research on the Internet contact your local library. Many offer free courses to show you how to do it.

Following are some useful web sites to get you started but you will have to experiment with the Internet to find out which sites are of most value to you. Take the time to find these sites and monitor them. You will find that many sites offer free newsletters which they will e-mail to you on a regular basis. Experiment with these too until you come up with the ones you find to be most useful for you.

Useful Web Sites

All of the following web sites are prefixed with www and all letters are lower case.

Business, National & International News
ceoexpress.com

Job Boards
monster.com
careerclick.com
careerpath.com
workopolis.com

Contractor Services
elance.com

Career Guides
rileyguide.com
careers.wsj.com
careermag.com
jobhuntersbible.com
1099.com
freeagentnation.com

Contemporary/Business News
fastcompany.com
nua.ie

Information Technology
wired.com
redherring.com

Basic Research
northernlight.com
google.com
refdesk.com

Looking for Work on the Internet

The Internet is increasingly becoming the media of choice for companies looking to hire people and for people who are looking for work. There are thousands of job boards on the Internet at this point and most company web sites have a section where they list their current employment opportunities.

Obviously, as part of your objective to be connected to what is going on in the workplace, you have to be monitoring these web sites. While there are thousands of sites to follow, in reality, there will not be many sites that are of interest and value to you. Unless you want to relocate, you're only interested in the work opportunities in your area and that narrows your options considerably.

The main newspapers in your area will have their own job boards and you will want to monitor those as well. Some work opportunities will be listed on the web sites of various associations in your area and since you know what companies you want to target, you will look at their sites too.

You still want to monitor the employment section of your newspaper but you will see that more and more ads ask you to respond to them electronically and give you their e-mail address or web site address, or both. Watch for more companies to give their web site address only. In part, what they are saying to you is don't bother sending in your application until you have studied our web site.

Companies will increasingly send you to their web site and make you go through a series of screening steps and only after you have successfully done that will you be given the chance to submit your resume.

Electronic Resumes

Here is another marketing tool that you must have if you want to take advantage of the work opportunities that exist today.

You should have several of these. One would be in plain text, with no special characters, bolding or underlining since that's the format that many companies ask for. Another would be in word processing format and would look the same as the twenty-first century resume, shown previously. You could use this one to solicit individuals whose e-mail addresses you have and who you have found out from networking or research are good prospects for you to contact.

When you submit your resume it will probably be scanned by software that is designed to screen out unwanted applications. It does this by looking for keywords in the resume. For example, in the Information Technology area, resumes would be scanned looking for keywords that indicated that the applicant had experience with current software packages and areas like "project management". If you were applying and had experience in these areas it would be imperative that you include these words or phrases in your resume.

The following page outlines a sample electronic resume.

Joseph A. Flynn

A highly competent Information Technology executive with over 15 years experience in different industries. Expertise in CORPORATE SYSTEMS PLANNING, PROJECT MANAGEMENT and NETWORK and OPERATING SYSTEMS ARCHITECTURE. Skilled in working with and in training non-IT managers and their staff. Experience with LAN, WAN, NOVELL, ORACLE, UNIX, SUN & TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

Accomplishments
Trained and managed 250 IT users during a major conversion of an outdated MIS system.

Achieved a 25% savings in IT costs by streamlining inefficient methodologies used by IT and user staff.

Worked with a group of senior managers to redefine the MIS system to produce more timely and relevant reports for managers and user personnel.

Planned, implemented and documented systems and procedures for a disaster recovery plan to ensure the stability of an MIS system.

Developed and taught a course for IT professionals to help them better understand the needs and challenges of non-IT users of MIS systems.

Worked with a group of marketing professionals to develop a corporate web site to facilitate inquiries from customers about the company's products and services.

Career History
Urban Enterprises, Victoria, B.C., 1995–2000 www.uei.com
Director, Technical Services

Mercantile Fund, Vancouver, B.C., 1990–1995 www.mfc.ca
Manager, Information Services

High-Tech Consulting, Vancouver, B.C., 1983–1990 www.htc.com
Systems Analyst

B.C. Lumber, Vancouver, B.C., 1980–1983 www.bcl.ca
Documentation Analyst

Education
Master of Science, Applied Mathematics, UBC
Bachelor of Science, Applied Mathematics, SFU
Many IT courses from IBM, Microsoft and other major IT vendors

1695 Edgewater Street, North Vancouver, B.C. V7N 4M8
Phone: (604) 985-8881, Fax: (604) 985-9999, E-mail: jaf@direct.ca

Comments

Note that in comparison to the sample twenty-first century resume previously shown, this one contains no bolding or underlining. Note also in the Profile section that keywords have been added. These are the type of keywords that the screening software would be looking for.

Checklist # Two

- How are you going to market your services tomorrow, next week, next month? Do you have a marketing plan? Who are you going to sell your services to?

- What are you doing to expand your network of contacts, especially the promoters? When you find new people to include in your network, are you taking time to educate them about how they can help you?

- One of your promoters passes along your telephone number to one of their contacts. What impression will they get when they call? Will they hear someone who is upbeat, professional, ready to go? If you're not available when they call, how long will it take you to respond to their inquiry?

- What specifically are you doing to advertise your services? What plans do you have to improve your advertising over the next three months?

- What workshops, meetings, seminars, trade shows, etc., are happening in your area over the next couple of months? Which of them are you planning to attend? What is your networking plan when you do attend?

- Are there any charitable, church, business, sports or community groups who could benefit from your services? Do you have a plan to contact them?

- When you send material to people about your services, are you specific about the action you want them to take? Will you specify that you will follow up with them?

- Have you taken advantage of the various free resources

that are available in your area to promote your services?

- Are you on the executive committee of the groups that you belong to? Are you maximizing your opportunities to promote your services through the business and professional associations that you belong to?

- Do you have a list of web sites that you monitor regularly? How many newsletters do you receive?

- How often do you check your e-mail? Is your e-mail address on every piece of information that relates to your business? When you correspond with people, do you make reference to your e-mail address?

- Have you created at least one electronic brochure?

- When you run across good, informative material on the Internet are you sharing it with the contacts in your network?

- What are you learning from the Internet about other contractors?

- Are you finding that when news is reported in the mainstream media you are often already aware of it because of your connection to the various web sites and newsletters you receive?

You can't steal second
base with your foot on first.

Part Four:
Getting Started: The First 90 Days

Pre-Selling Tasks

- How easily can you answer the question, "What Do You Do?".

If the answer doesn't easily roll off your tongue you've got some work to do. You have to be able to answer this at any time, particularly at networking events, in a positive, upbeat, confident and persuasive manner. You need to be able to sell yourself at any time.

- Decide on the name that you are going to operate under. Give this careful thought, it could be costly if you decide to change it sometime down the road. Also decide on a title for yourself, if you feel that a title is necessary.

- Get some advice on the legal and tax implications of being self-employed. Find a tax accountant who is experienced in this area. There are different options for running a business, from incorporating to operating as a sole proprietor. You should be aware of the pros and cons of each of these.

- Decide on where you are going to operate your business. At home, from an office, out of a business centre, sharing an office, or a combination of these?

- What will you use as your business address on your stationery and marketing materials?

- Set up your communications network. Your business phone number, fax number, e-mail address, pager number, cell phone number. Your telecommunications provider offers lots of options today to make you look and operate like a professional even if you operate from home.

Familiarize yourself with these options and use them. Make sure that the telecommunications and Internet service providers that you use are well-established and are reliable and most importantly, will be there to help you if you have problems. They'll all tell you of course that they provide wonderful service. Try to find someone who uses them and ask them what their experience was when they had a problem.

Don't go the cheap route on these things. Saving yourself a couple of dollars a month could cost you much more in the long run. Be especially careful with the Internet service provider you choose. This is still a relatively new area and there are new companies starting up all the time. They're not all going to survive so pick one that you're confident will be around in the future and that has a reputation for providing good service.

- Create your twenty-first century resume and have some sample cover and marketing letters ready to use. Create everything in electronic form, including your brochure, and try them out on some of your contacts. It's easy to make changes when they're in this format before you actually get them printed.

- Don't just pick people who are your big fans, pick others who are likely to give you honest and critical feedback. That's what you need. The better the job you do in this phase, the higher your chances of success when you go live with prospective clients or customers.

- Once you have thoroughly tested everything in electronic form you can now move to the printed copy stage. Order your stationery and make sure that your business cards, letterhead and envelopes have a consistent format. Order your brochure and any other marketing documents you

want to use. Even though you've tested all of this stuff in electronic form, expect to make some changes after your initial printing so don't commit to any volume at this point.

- Once you have all of your material ready, again test it before going live. Try it out on a cross-section of the contacts in your network. Send them the material as if they were prospects that you were going after and ask them for some critical feedback.

- Finally, before you go live, send your material out to your network and let them know that you're ready for business and request their help to get you up and running.

- From the free publicity resources that are available to you, select the ones that you feel will be most beneficial to you and get the word out to them that you're ready for business.

Start Your Engines

Enough of the trial stuff, it's time to start making some money.

- ✦ Select the first 30 companies that you want to contact as prospective clients or employers.

  - Ten that you know well.
  - Ten that you know less well.
  - Ten that you don't know but consider potential clients.

- ✦ Decide on how you are going to contact them, what you are going to say and what you want them to do. Be ready to answer questions about how much you charge and your payment terms. Are you prepared to offer any of these people a free, trial period to show them what you can do? How are you going to contact them?

  - By telephone?
  - By e-mail?
  - By fax?
  - By regular mail?
  - By popping in to see them?

If you opt for contact by e-mail, fax or regular mail, tell them that you will follow up with a phone call within a week and make sure that you do that.

Fine-tune Your Approach

It will take some time for you to contact these 30 potential clients. Once you've contacted all of them, take a step back and analyze how the whole experience went. What worked? What didn't work? No doubt some of your materials will have to be modified regardless of the testing you did previously.

You've taken the plunge into the deep end and now, like any other contractor or business that's just started up, you keep at it and keep modifying your approach until you get it right. Stay flexible and don't get discouraged. Nobody gets it right the first time, not even the big companies with all of the resources they have available to them. Welcome to the world of the self-employed.

Final Thoughts

Most of us were brought up, educated and trained for a workplace that is fundamentally different from the one we see today and the one we will live with from now on. This transformation that is going on in the workplace presents challenges to the growing number of people who no longer have a job-centered career. To meet these challenges, we need to incorporate some survival techniques into our lives and keep a proper sense of perspective. Here are some things to consider:

Regular Exercise

Unlike our ancestors, most of us don't get enough exercise. Make a commitment to increase your physical fitness. The best way to do that is to join a fitness club and have them design a program for you. That way, you're more likely to stay with it and you'll be less likely to overdo it and injure yourself.

Keep Mentally Fit

- Make a point of reading uplifting, positive material.
- Avoid negative-thinking people and negative-oriented media.
- If you don't have a spiritual anchor, i.e., yoga, meditation, religion, etc., try to find one. We all get down at times and need something to calm us and lift our spirits.

Polish Your Communication Skills

This is something that we all need to do, there's always room for improvement here. Actors, television broadcasters and

commentators are always sharpening their communication skills and we need to do the same.

Continue to Grow

Push yourself and periodically check up on yourself to review what you have learned in recent weeks or months. What areas of your personal and working life need to be improved upon? What educational or training opportunities are coming up in the next few months that you plan to take advantage of?

Take Some Risks

Let your hair down now and then and try something new. Don't always look for answers from the so-called experts, trust your own judgement and experiment. Don't be afraid to fall on your face, that's how you learn and grow.

Say No More Often

Live a balanced life. Our society is one of people frantically running around with never enough time for themselves or their families. That's the society that we've created and it's up to us to realize how wrong it is and to start to change it. Get your priorities straight. Family, health, personal and spiritual values are far more important than business success. If you find that work is dominating your life put on the brakes and get some of the work out of your life.

Try Looking Back

We get so wrapped up in our current and short-term challenges that our perspective on life gets out of balance. Most of our parents and grandparents went through some very tough times in their lives, tougher than what we are facing. They survived

and moved on. So will you.

Be Kind to Yourself

It's a quirk of human nature that when we go through challenging times we occasionally get down on ourselves. Instead of beating up on yourself, remind yourself of your successes. Learn the great art of doing the best you can with what you have and where you are.

Good luck to you.

Bury me with a fork.

An elderly, dying woman made
an unusual request. When asked
if she would like to take something
with her to her grave, she said,
"Yes, bury me with a fork".
When asked why she wanted a fork,
she said;

"Because the best is yet to come".

Appendix One:
Managing Your Career

Overview

Regardless of the changes that have occurred in the workplace in recent years, you could argue that it has always been in the best interest of the individual to look out for themselves and that taking ownership of the need to manage their career is the smart thing to do. That sounds logical enough but many people don't know how to manage their career and further, they assume that their employer will do it for them.

That may sound naive to many people but the fact is that traditionally employers have managed the careers of their employees and some still do. If you talk to people who have been in a stable job for years, they may never have given the idea any thought at all. It is something that employees have often taken for granted as being part of the package that comes with having a job and again, many still think that way.

People who have lost what they thought were permanent jobs will see such an attitude as outdated and out of touch with the realities of today's workplace forgetting the fact that they probably thought that way before they lost their job. Here we have a good example of the paradox of today's workplace. How you see it will be directly related to your experience in it.

If you have lost your job, you will probably buy into the popular notion that being loyal to your employer is a thing of the past. If you're one of the many who still have a steady job in an industry that is growing, you'll probably take the opposite view and be quite comfortable in being loyal to your company.

This raises an interesting question. How would you advise a young person who is about to enter the workplace about what their attitude should be toward managing their career? The answer will be influenced by your own experience and your opinion on where you think the workplace is headed.

The job and all it traditionally entails is far from being dead in spite of volumes of opinions that tell us it is. That being said, if you currently have a job and you're doing nothing to prepare

yourself for the possibilty that you could lose it, you may be setting yourself up for a major disappointment.

In this section, we will take the position that regardless of what your current employment status is, it is in your own interest to assume the responsiblity for managing your career. If you have always believed that your employer will do it for you, you need to rethink your position. Given all of the turmoil and uncertainty that is going on in the workplace, it makes little sense to assume that somehow you are going to be unaffected by it.

In spite of all of the evidence to the contrary, many people still can't face the possibility that their world could be turned on its head through the loss of their job. It's quite common, even in companies where downsizing is going on all around them, for people to convince themselves that somehow they're not going to be affected by it. They find ways to rationalize that their department, division, branch or whatever is doing well and therefore will not be affected.

These are the people who are in deep trouble when they do lose their job. It's only after the loss that they realize how dependent they were on their company and how ill-prepared they are to find alternative employment.

The smart and realistic position to take is to at least acknowledge the possiblity that you could lose your job. Ask yourself if there is anything you can do to make yourself more valuable to your employer and begin to prepare yourself for the worst-case scenario where you do find yourself unemployed.

Being informed and facing the realities of today's workplace is the best position to take. A company can survive without you, so you owe it to yourself and your dependents to prepare yourself for that possibility.

If you are a graduate entering the workplace and you land yourself what appears to be a plum, stable job, don't rest on your laurels. Look around you and you'll see many talented people who used to have what you have and through no fault

of their own and for a variety of reasons lost their job.

You can't make yourself immune to the possibility of losing your job but there are things that you can do to decrease the chance of it happening and to prepare yourself for survival in the event that it does happen to you.

Becoming Career Fit

On page 40, just before the exercises that define your personal and career profile, you were given a quiz to determine how career fit you are. Go back to look at your answers and ask yourself how prepared you are to find work if you suddenly found yourself out of a job. To become career fit and to maintain your fitness, there are some things that you need to do on a regular basis.

Manage Your Career

Managing your career is your responsibility whether you are employed, unemployed or underemployed. If you've been employed by the same company for a number of years and you've never given this any serious thought, you should consider getting some professional help and advice on how to go about it.

Go back to the exercises where you defined your personal and career profile and review them. Are you confident that you know your strengths, weaknesses and interests and where you want to go in your career or could you use some help to further refine these? Shop carefully if you decide to get some professional help and make sure that you are comfortable with the counselor you choose and their experience and qualifications.

Many people wait until they lose their job before seeking this type of help. Getting it when you are employed makes more sense and it may even decrease your chances of becoming unemployed. Most colleges and universities offer part-time courses in career planning and assessment and some offer counseling services to the public.

If you don't have a written career plan, get some help in putting one together.

Sharpen Your Communication Skills

Being competent in your field and having current skills are no guarantee that you will find work. If you have poor or mediocre communication skills you could lose out to people who are less skilled than you but who communicate in a more compelling and persuasive manner.

In today's workplace the onus is on the individual to catch the attention of potential employers whether you are communicating with them by computer, telephone, fax, in person or in writing, so make sure that the way you communicate in any of these modes is effective and businesslike.

Take advantage of the programs and courses available in your area that polish and strengthen communication skills. Finally, give serious consideration to joining a local Toastmasters International group.

Get Connected

If you were asked to describe the important, current issues and developments going on in your field or profession and where it is headed, could you do that? Do you subscribe to and continually monitor the main business publications in your area as well as the trade and professional magazines and journals that relate to your field? Which companies in your area are expanding? Can you name any new companies that started up in the last couple of months?

Which TV programs and web sites that focus on workplace issues and trends do you watch and access on a regular basis? How many electronic newsletters that focus on the workplace and your field are downloaded to your PC on a daily, weekly or monthly basis? What have you learned from them recently?

Stay Current

If you are connected, you will know what skills are in demand in your field and the new areas and technologies that are coming on stream. Do you have those skills? Do you have a plan to obtain them? What programs and courses are being offered in your community over the next six months by colleges, universities, professional and other groups that would increase your employability if you took advantage of them?

What professional development programs are being offered by the associations that you belong to in the next six months and which ones are you planning to attend? Are you on the mailing list of the colleges and universities in your area to receive their continuing education calendars and notices of upcoming career development programs?

Expand and Cultivate Your Network

How many promoters and supporters are there in your network and how often do you communicate with them? What are you doing to expand your network, especially the promoters in it? Are you on the executive or actively involved in the associations that you belong to? Are there any associations that you don't belong to currently that could be beneficial to you if you did join them? What networking events are happening in your area in the next couple of months that you plan to attend?

What significant news on workplace activity did you pick up from your network in the past month? How many news items, job or work leads did you pass on to the people in your network in the past month?

Review Your Finances

An important part of managing your career is to take a fresh and innovative look at your financial situation and to do that

most people would benefit from the services of a financial planner. If you are new to self-employment, or could be facing it as an employment option, you need to take a hard look at the financial implications of that on your lifestyle and how you manage your money.

Most peoples' lives are built around the assumption that there is a steady flow of income from a job. How prepared are you in the event that you lose that job, maybe for an extended period of time? Financial planners suggest that you should have at least six months' salary in your bank account and save around ten percent of your income. Do you do that? If not, how would you survive a long period of unemployment?

Financial planning goes well beyond looking at cash flow and determining your income and expenses. You may have to take a broader look at your lifestyle and assumptions about how you'll survive in retirement, and you may have to generate alternative ways of earning your income. You may have difficulty replacing that one salary that has been your primary source of income for years and be forced to come up with more than one way to earn your living.

You may have to simplify your lifestyle. A spouse who may not have worked for years might have to find employment. Holidays, club memberships and regular forms of entertainment that have long been a part of your life may now become luxuries that you can't afford.

If you live in an expensive neighbourhood and have substantial equity in your home, it might make more sense to move into a more modest home, reduce your monthly expenses and put the money currently tied up in real estate into revenue-generating investments.

Financial planning is an area where many people are weak and they avoid facing it until they are in financial difficulty. Most of them would benefit from the advice of a qualified, financial planner.

Take Care of Yourself

One of the growth industries in the 1990s was outplacement. Companies who lay off employees sometimes engage the services of outplacement companies to help their employees cope with the loss of their job and help them find alternative employment. These companies would also be doing these employees a favour if they paid for a one-year membership in a health club. The importance of maintaining healthy physical and mental conditioning in periods of stress is something that few people understand, if anything they tend to let these things deteriorate. You would benefit from increasing your overall conditioning regardless of your employment status but it is of particular importance if you have recently lost a job or are in danger of losing one. It is difficult to make intelligent choices and maintain a realistic and healthy perspective on life when you are physically and emotionally drained.

Get in shape and see more of your friends, family and positive-thinking, supportive people you know. Find a spiritual anchor, something that lets you see life from a broader, more philosophical point of view and instead of beating up on yourself, remind yourself of your successes.

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Becoming You Inc.

One of the interesting phenomena going on in the workplace today is the number of people who are going through the transition from being traditional employees to becoming self-employed as contractors or small business owners. Making the transition is a struggle for most people which shouldn't come as a surprise when you consider that our society is one where the majority of people have earned their living from traditional employment for the past 100–150 years.

An ironic twist to all of this is that some of these people who struggled with the challenge to become self-employed, especially those who operate as contractors, are being offered full-time jobs by the companies that they contract with. This often creates a dilemma for them. Regardless of their discomfort when they initially made the transition to self-employment, many end up enjoying it and the idea of giving it up to become a traditional employee again doesn't appeal to them. They're torn between their new-found independence and the option to trade it for a more stable and predictable flow of income. That struggle is more common than you may think.

The issue of traditional employment versus self-employment also raises an interesting challenge for people who are entering the workplace for the first time. Which of these two options do you pursue?

Establishing You Inc.

As challenging as it is to become self-employed, the good news is that there are lots of resources available to help you. There are numerous books and web sites on the topic and most colleges and universities offer courses and seminars on how to set yourself up. You may even qualify for government assistance to attend some of these.

There are also many associations and groups of self-

employed people and entrepreneurs that you can, and should, seriously consider joining. It makes little sense to try this on your own when you can have access to and learn from those who have already done it. These groups also are great for networking and as support for those who are new to self-employment.

In Canada, there is an association of student entrepreneurs called ACE-Canada. You can look at their web site at: www.acecanada.ca and pick up lots of useful information and tips. If telecommuting is something you are interested in or would like to explore look at www.ivc.ca and you'll find a wealth of information on the subject. Have a look also at www.elance.com and you'll see how an international group of self-employed "Wired Guns" operates and provides opportunities to find work. With a little bit of research on the web you may even find an association or group that specializes in your field of expertise.

Loyalty

If you currently have a job but are entertaining the possibility of becoming self-employed you may be concerned that you're being disloyal to your present employer by seriously considering self-employment at the same time you're drawing a paycheque. As long as you're meeting your commitments to your employer you're not being disloyal to them; you're being practical and realistic.

Don't forget that if the management or owners of a company decide that it is in the best interest of the company to layoff you and some of your co-workers, that's what they'll do. They're not being disloyal to you and they won't enjoy doing it but they won't hesitate to do it if it is in the best interest of the company.

Outsourcing

One of the common reasons for layoffs in companies is the decision to outsource some of the work to external contractors or companies. This is often done because it is cheaper and usually more efficient to do so. These companies often retain people whose skill set fits within the core competencies of the industry or type of work they do and outsource work that is of a more general nature. Sometimes they layoff people and hire them back as contractors.

If that were to happen in the company you're with, where do you think you would fit into all of this change? Do you possess a skill set that fits within the percieved core competencies or would it be easy for the company to replace you? If you don't have the skill set that they would tend to retain, is there a way for you to acquire those skills assuming that you wanted to stay with the company?

What if the company announced that it wanted a workforce in several months that was made up primarily of contractors but before they went outside to hire people, they would give all current employees the first shot at being contractors? There's a catch though. If you want to be one of those contractors, you have to make a business case that shows the company that it's in their best interest to hire you. Give this scenario some thought and determine what your business case would be. If nothing else it will force you to look at your job from a broader perspective and evaluate how valuable you are to the company.

Increasing Your Employability

One of the primary challenges in today's workplace whether you currently have a job or are a contractor is to develop a strategy for improving the skills you have to offer an employer or company.

Successful companies understand that they have to continually look for ways to improve the product or service that they offer to their customers. If you develop a similar mind-set with regards to the skill set you have to offer, you're more likely to be employed versus someone who is cruising along with a skill set that is not appreciating in value to their employer or potential employers.

Selling You Inc.

Selling. This is at the top of the list of the things that people who are new to self-employment either hate or are very uncomfortable with. It's also the key thing that will determine your success or failure. There are a number of reasons for this discomfort, including lack of preparation, misconceptions about what it's about and failure to understand the effort needed to become proficient at it.

Professional salespeople go through months of intensive training before they're allowed to get in front of potential customers. In Part Two, you were given a series of exercises to determine exactly what you had to offer potential clients. How much effort did you put into those exercises? To do them effectively would have required a lot of time, thought and revisions until you came up with answers that you were comfortable with and had internalized.

The Foundation

Most people who are new to self-employment don't understand the need for this analysis but it's the foundation on which your ability to sell effectively is built. It's the equivalent of the training that companies put their salespeople through. There are no shortcuts to this process and it's an ongoing challenge. Your comfort level in selling yourself will be directly related to how hard you worked at it initially and how much time you devote to perfecting it.

As an employee, you can get by with having a skill set that you apply to the tasks or work assigned to you. It's not that simple when you're self-employed. You still need that skill set but unless you can persuade someone to purchase it, you have nothing to apply it to. So, go back to Part Two and honestly assess how well you prepared yourself. Forget about selling in the meantime. Until you get this part down pat, you're not ready

to get in front of a potential client.

Effective Selling

Another reason why people don't like selling is that they assume that they're not good at it and probably never will be. Some are uncomfortable talking about themselves and their abilities. It's not about acquiring the gift of the gab or fundamentally changing who and what you are. In fact, trying to be something you're not is the worst thing you can do. People will quickly pick up on that. Remember that by doing an effective job in Part Two, you will be miles ahead of the majority who either don't go through that process or if they do, they do it superficially.

One of the keys to successful selling is also one of the simplest things to understand. You have to be genuinely good at what you do and be convinced that you can help the client you're talking to. They'll quickly pick up on that. Being sincere will go a long way to offset the lack of professional selling skills.

The last thing they want from you is a slick sales pitch. They'll be evaluating you on how well you know your subject, how effective you are in understanding their needs and how you can help them. They won't hang you if you're not perfect but they'll quickly detect any effort to fake it, so don't ever do that.

If you're asked a question that you don't know the answer to, say you don't know. If it's important to the client and your chances of getting the assignment, tell them you'll get the answer and get back to them and be sure to do that as fast as you can.

Can You Help Them?

That's the key issue. They wouldn't be talking to you unless they had responded to your marketing efforts or had expressed a need for the service you provide. You're being given an opportunity to convince them that it's in their best interest to

hire you. Here we come again to a point that has been emphasized several times, the need to polish your communication skills. While they won't be swayed by a slick sales pitch from you, you better be ready to describe what you do and how that will benefit them in a businesslike, persuasive manner.

Picking Your Brains

Be careful not to give your expertise away. In your eagerness to show a potential client what you can do for them you may unwittingly tell them enough about how you can help them that, with some intuition and imagination, they can then implement your ideas without you. There are people who will exploit you if they get a chance to do it, so protect yourself.

In making your initial proposal to them, your challenge is to give them enough information to demonstrate that you have the expertise you claim to have and can help them without giving them the answers to their problems up front. If you sense that they are trying to pick your brains, don't be shy about telling them that you'll be happy to provide specific recommendations to their problems once you have a firm commitment from them that you will be paid for doing so.

Testing You

Even if you have good marketing material that shows that you know your stuff and have a track record of helping clients, they may want to see a concrete demonstration of your skills before they commit to hiring you. For example, if you are an accountant, they may give you a copy of their latest financial statements and ask you to analyze them to see if you can detect any potential problem areas and show them how you would address those. If you know your stuff, you won't be intimidated by this, you'll welcome the chance to demonstrate your

expertise. Just tell them enough that clearly shows them you can help them without giving away your expertise or solving their problems for free.

Show Your Stuff

Even if they don't give you a specific test, you might want to take the initiative and show them that you understand their challenges and can help them. For example, if you're aware of some productivity-enhancing techniques or procedures that they're not using, whet their appetite by showing them that you know about them and how to implement them into their operation.

If you've studied their web site and the sites of their competitors and have spotted something that might improve their operation, tell them about it in general terms. Just be careful and diplomatic in how you communicate this information. Handled properly, it might seal the deal for you. Handled poorly, you might turn them off or make them feel uncomfortable.

This can be especially challenging for senior people or those who have more experience and expertise than the decision maker or business owner they're talking with. Their challenge is to impress the client with their expertise and assure them that their role will be a supportive one in improving their operation thereby making the client look good. This must be done in a non-threatening manner.

Objections

Don't expect that they will agree with everything you're telling them. That won't happen regardless of how well you've prepared yourself so try to take a different tack. For each argument you have for buying your services, play devil's advocate and see how a client may come up with an objection

to it.

Professional salespeople are grilled on this aspect of selling. One of the things salespeople need to know about is their competition and how they stack up against the product or service of their competitors. They assume that a potential client will compare what they are offering to what they can get from their competitors so they have to be ready for the challenge. So do you.

Honestly try to assess who your competition is and what they have to offer. Never criticize your competition. Get the client focussed instead on your strengths. Here's where all that preparation you went through in Part Three to create your marketing materials will pay off.

Pricing

Here is one of the trickier challenges you'll face in selling yourself. Try to keep the initial discussions focussed on determining the client's needs and how you can help them. The more comfortable you make them that you know what you're talking about and can help them, the less they will focus on your price but don't kid yourself, it will come up in the initial discussions and you have to be ready to address it.

You should be able to give the client a rough idea of what you charge on an hourly, weekly, monthly or longer-term basis but emphasize that you need to have a clear understanding of their needs and how long it will take you to meet them before you can give them a firm quote on what it will cost.

If they are almost exclusively focussed on the price of your services before you have even determined what their needs are, that could be a red flag. You need to be careful about taking on a client like that. A serious prospect will understand that you first need to determine what their needs are and your ability to meet them and they won't have a problem with you taking some time to come up with a firm quote for your services.

Resilience

The final quality you have to acquire and develop to become successful in selling yourself is the ability to deal with disappointments and the loss of what you thought was a sure deal. Professional salespeople have to deal with it too, it's probably the toughest thing to deal with in sales.

You did everything right, the customer was genuinely interested in doing business with you, you were probably depending on it to pay bills, then at the last minute the whole thing falls apart through no fault of yours. It happens to everyone. It's part of doing business and you'll have to learn to deal with it. Bounce back and move on.

Also, regardless of how well you prepare yourself in Part Two and Three, you're going to end up with egg on your face from time to time, especially in the beginning. Again, everybody goes through that and you have to learn to roll with it.

Clients will forgive you if you screw up a bit at times as long as they're comfortable that you're genuinely trying to help them and give them an honest deal. Which brings us to the final point. Never underestimate a client's ability to evaluate your sincerity. They're a lot smarter and more intuitive than people who are new to selling give them credit for.

Appendix Two:
The New Workplace

Overview

At the beginning of the first year of the twenty-first century, the hot topic was the Internet and dot-com companies were the darlings of Wall Street. The so-called bricks and mortar companies were considered passe and doing business in cyberspace was the *dernier cri*. Before the end of the year, dot-com companies, at least the ones that were still in business, were the dogs of Wall Street and the NASDAQ, where most of them reside, was in shambles.

So apart from the fact that we know the Wall Street shill is alive and well, what else can we learn from this experience? We are reminded once again that life is far from predictable and that the experts whose faces appear regularly on our television screens are anything but experts.

Notwithstanding the unpredictability of life, the marketplace and in particular the workplace that we're trying to understand, there are some trends and issues that affect how we will live and earn our living in the foreseeable future. In this section we will have a look at some of these.

Finally, lest we take ourselves too seriously, we will end on a light note and look at some observations from a group that we can always rely on to call a spade a shovel and see how they perceive things. That's right, kids.

University Program Shows the Way

In 1999, the Entrepreneurship Program at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, www.uvic.ca, won the Innovation in Entrepreneurship Pedagogy Award at the annual conference of the Academy of Management in Chicago. They beat out seventeen other universities from around the world, including Harvard Business School. The previous year's winner was Stanford University, which puts the University of Victoria in some pretty classy company.

What is striking about UVic's program is how practical and real-world oriented it is, characteristics that don't always come to mind when you think about university programs. In one example of their innovative approach, students are asked to start a company with five dollars and operate it for ten days.

Just as the twentieth century was the century of the full-time, permanent job, the twenty-first century, for a growing number of people, will be the century of self-employment. This program is a good example of how colleges and universities can help their students to adapt to this significant and permanent change in the workplace.

The Fourth R

For a long time we have talked about the three R's of education: reading, writing and arithmetic. The time has come to add a fourth R, running your own business; a term that will cover all aspects of self-employment.

Considering how the workplace has changed and the very real probability that today's university and college graduates will have to earn their living through self-employment, a case can be made for ensuring that they have access to at least a fundamental understanding of the challenges of self-employment. For those who are serious about starting their own business, a comprehensive program to help them succeed

should be made available to them.

To their credit, some post-secondary students in Canada have already recognized the changes taking place in the workplace and have established a national organization, ACE-Canada, www.acecanada.com, that promotes entrepreneurship. Every college and university should be associated with this organization or others like it with the full support of the faculty, administration and possibly some funding from the government.

Congratulations to UVic on their award and initiative in creating a much-needed program and let's hope that other colleges and universities will follow their example.

The Internet and the Law

In 1999, a restaurant in Vancouver, British Columbia, was in the news because of its name: *De Niro's*. It seems that the owner was a big fan of the movie star, Robert De Niro, and named the place after him and filled it with pictures of him and other De Niro memorabilia.

Mr. De Niro became aware of this and far from being flattered by such attention from an adoring fan, took strong exception to the use of his name without his consent. The restaurant owner, persuaded by some legal heavyweights, was forced to change the name and remove all items that referred to Mr. De Niro. All of this came at a considerable cost. It serves them right you may say, everybody knows you can't use famous people or famous companies' names without their permission. In the real world, that is true enough.

Fast-forward to the zany world of the Internet where stealing famous people's and company's names has turned into a profitable business for some people and is seen as having a certain cachet by some in cyberspace. The perpetrators even have cool-sounding names: cybersquatters.

This is about to change. The U.S. Congress has enacted the Trademark Cyberpiracy Prevention Act and similar legislation is under development by other countries. Predictably these new laws are being challenged as unconstitutional by some critics, so the courts will be busy dealing with the arguments.

What this points out is the huge disconnection between the real world and the world of the Internet. At this point in time, society doesn't quite know what to do about it. What is taken for granted as common sense and common business sense in the real world is often disregarded in cyberspace.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in the stock market. For a while in 2000 it seemed that all conventional rules of prudent investing had gone out the window when it came to anything associated with the Internet. By the end of 2000,

sanity had again been restored and many of the high-flying dot-com companies had either gone out of business or had their share prices drastically reduced. The only winners in this carnage were those who had been smart enough to anticipate Internet mania and the Wall Street shills behind them.

For years the Internet was a haven for techies and academics who convinced themselves that they owned it and that it should be excluded from the laws, rules and regulations that society has to abide by. Some of them still think that way. It's not that their collective attitude is criminal. It's more a combination of snobbishness, arrogance and naivete. These early adapters of the technology have been used to a freewheeling environment where they set the rules and they can't stomach the idea of sharing it with the common folk. But share it they will and as the Internet becomes more mainstream, part of the shift will include laws, rules and regulations that will significantly change it from what it is now.

Cyberliability Insurance

Any company that is doing business on the Internet should consider liability insurance. E-commerce failings can expose companies to worldwide liability as can e-mails, information posted on web sites and comments submitted by employees to chatrooms. Employees can libel colleagues, clients and competitors without the knowledge of the managers.

Norwich Union had to pay $715,660 U.S. to a competitor when a court ruled that an employee had defamed the competitor with an internal e-mail. The insurance of e-commerce is at a formative stage at this point but there are insurance companies that will underwrite cyberliability policies.

Telecommuting

Let's take a bird's-eye view of a typical workday in any city of your choice. It starts out with thousands of people in the suburbs and around the city piling into their cars at the same time and heading off into commuting hell. Commuting times are getting longer and tempers are getting shorter. If someone had mentioned "road rage" in a conversation with you ten years ago, you would have asked them to explain what that was. Cities around the world can't find enough money to solve their transportation problems and even if they did find the money, there isn't enough land to build the infrastructure needed to handle the traffic.

When people get to work, what is it they do? For a substantial number of them, and their numbers are growing, they sit in front of a computer and begin to work. Given how easy it is to have a networked computer at home these days, that begs the question, "Why did they drive all the way from their home to work to do something that they could just as easily have done at home?" We're not just talking about clerical workers here. Working at a computer these days makes up part of the workday for most people. Currently workers spend on average about a third of their workday at a computer.

While all this is going on, there's a solution to the problem sitting under our noses. It's been around for decades and an increasing number of workers are taking advantage of it. It's telecommuting. In the U.S., about four million people did this in 1990 and that number rose to around twenty-four million in 2000.

Some major companies see the advantage of telecommuting. Ford Motor Company and Delta Airlines are just two of a growing number of companies who are equipping their workers with fully loaded PCs with unlimited Internet access and twenty-four-hour, on-line support that lets them work from home for at least part of the workweek. The

workers pay from $5 to $12 a month for the PCs which, includes Internet access and support. At those prices any company can afford to supply their employees with computers.

If you approached most business owners and managers and asked them if they were interested in something that would give them an additional one to two hours a day increased productivity from their workers for about $10 a month and decreased the cost of their office overhead at the same time, they'd be salivating at the idea. That's what telecommuting would do for them and their employees. Instead of wasting up to two hours or more commuting every day, they could spend that time working. The economics of telecommuting are simple and the technology required to do it is readily available. So why aren't there even more people doing it?

The answer is far from simple. We love our cars. We're so used to the traditional way of working we have difficulty accepting any other way of doing it. We like to socialize with co-workers. There's also an age factor to consider. The Net Generation has grown up with telecommuting and e-mailing their pals around the world regularly. They can't see why it's such a big deal for most adults to accept the idea of telecommuting.

Here are three questions every commuter should consider, hopefully with an open mind:

1. Why am I commuting in the first place?
2. Why am I commuting as often as I do?
3. Why am I commuting at the same time as everyone else?

If people approach these questions and begin to consider how they can incorporate telecommuting into how they work, they can impact their transportation problems in a way that no combination of more roads, bridges, tunnels and the various modes of transportation available today ever can.

For a comprehensive look at telecommuting see www.ivc.ca.

Those Fuzzy Unemployment Statistics

We're a society that's hooked on statistics. We get our daily fix from the media, which supplies us with an endless stream of numbers on the stock market, interest rates, the weather and so on. The unemployment rate is one of the most regularly quoted statistics and people generally accept it as an accurate measure of the percentage of the workforce that is unemployed. It's not.

Statistics Canada is the bureaucracy that produces the unemployment statistics which are derived from a sampling of about 50,000 households each month. They don't include people who can't work or who, more significantly, have given up looking for work. Statistics Canada knows these people exist, they even have an official category for them—"discouraged workers"—they just ignore them in compiling their monthly unemployment statistics.

Because it's an official statistic, people tend to interpret it literally. If we're told that the unemployment rate is six percent, we assume that 94 percent of the workforce must be employed. Not so. We know for starters that those "discouraged workers"are not being included. For a detailed look at Statistics Canada data see www.statcan.ca.

In determining those who fit into the category of being employed, the key factor that defines this category is if you worked and got paid. The amount of time you worked isn't taken into account. If you made a couple of bucks painting your neighbours' fence, technically, you were employed.

In an article in *The Employment Paper*, Helmut Pastrick, chief economist for the Credit Union Central of B.C., commenting on the official monthly unemployment statistic is quoted as saying, "It does miss a lot of hidden unemployment and underemployed people". In the same article, Dan Charrette, a Statistics Canada analyst agreed with that comment but defended the methodology by saying, "It conforms with international standards, so the figures mean something in

comparison to the rest of the world". Translation? Everybody else is fudging their numbers so we have to fudge ours too.

A look at the official U.S. unemployment figures would tend to back that up. Unemployment, we are told, is at historical lows. If things are as good as we are led to believe, why are there so many homeless people, overcrowded shelters for the dispossessed and a growing number of food banks that can't keep up with the demand for their services? Something doesn't add up here.

A recent PBS television program that focussed on Michigan painted a picture of historical lows in unemployment. Part of the program included comments from viewers who called in to talk about their experience in the workplace. Many of them took exception to the rosy picture on unemployment that was being portrayed. As one caller put it, "The only reason why the unemployment rate is so low is because of people like me who are holding down two jobs. At the same time, we're struggling to keep our heads above water". This lady was one of thousands in Michigan who used to have what she called a "real job" in the auto industry before being laid off.

Another program on CNN television focussed on a category that doesn't get much coverage in the press, the "working poor". It featured a couple in Connecticut who both had full-time jobs and put in long hours but who regularly had to go to a food bank for assistance to feed their family.

Considering the importance we attach to this statistic, we should be getting a much more accurate figure than we're currently getting. The best way to do that would be to take the whole process out of the hands of the bureaucrats and have the numbers compiled by research companies in the private sector but don't expect that to happen anytime soon.

In the meantime, if you're one of the many who are unemployed and struggling and think that there must be something wrong with you when you look at those monthly statistics, take heart. There are many more like you than the bureaucrats and politicians would have you believe.

How to Fill Those IT Jobs

Rarely a month goes by without some reference in the media to the shortage of qualified people for the growing number of unfilled jobs in the IT sector. This shortfall of IT workers has been predicted for years and it's a global problem with major countries scrambling to find workers. The demise of lots of dot-com companies in the U.S. in 2000 made over 40,000 workers available but that doesn't come close to meeting the demand.

In spite of this, the IT industry seems to be asleep at the switch, with no major innovations on the horizon to solve the problem. The reaction of the industry, again across the globe, is to look to the government to solve the problem. The favourite option is to look for cheap, trained people from other countries.

The U.S. Congress recently enacted a bill that significantly increases the immigration quotas for countries like India and China so that the IT industry can grab IT-trained workers from those countries. Germany wants to do the same thing but the government is facing stiff opposition from the unions who point out that with an unemployment rate of ten percent, the government should focus on training their own people to fill the vacant IT jobs.

It's high time that the IT industry worldwide woke up to the fact that solving the problem of a shortage of skilled workers is their responsibilty. Considering the wealth that has been generated in that industry in the past decade, it's about time that some of that wealth was plowed back into the community to train the educated people who are unemployed, underemployed or part of the growing number of "working poor" who would jump at the opportunity to get this training.

The IT industry could also learn a lesson from history. If we go back to the period just before World War II and look at the IT sector of the day, i.e., the factories that turned out

airplanes and all the other military equipment, we see that their predominately male workforce was highly skilled in their various crafts and trades.

With the onset of the war, all this changed and the workforce became predominately female, most of them with no training or background in these industries. Yet these factories continued to turn out quality products and significantly increased their output. Had anyone suggested to the factory owners and senior managers prior to the war that this was possible, they would have been laughed off the premises.

Today's IT industry is suffering from the same myopic thinking. At the same time that they are crying the blues about the lack of qualified people to fill those vacant jobs, there are lots of talented people around who, with access to some concentrated training in IT skills, could fill those jobs. While they lack specific IT skills, they can bring other skills in the arts and sciences that are increasingly valued by modern corporations.

That was an opinion expressed by about thirty CEOs of companies like IBM, Compaq and Cisco Systems who met in Toronto in 2000. To the surprise of many, this group spoke against newspaper articles decrying "funding useless university programs", suggesting instead more funding for technology graduates.

Don Tapscott, the chairman of the Alliance for Converging Technologies is quoted as saying, "Technology leaders, entrepreneurs and business leaders all believe we would make a huge, historic mistake by focussing purely on technical education". Declan French, head of Thinkpath Inc, a six hundred employee international recruitment firm is also quoted as saying, "Techies can only do so much. They can't do the content, they can't do the graphics and they don't easily understand how people are going to interact with the product, or the Internet or even each other". Both of these statements

will come as a surprise to the thousands of arts and science graduates worldwide who are consistently snubbed by the IT industry.

So, the IT industry can solve their recruiting problems by providing concentrated training to the arts and science graduates who are available or wasting their talent in menial jobs. The governments can push them in this direction by providing funding to those who embrace this approach and ignoring the pleas for handouts from those who don't.

Such an approach may also get the backing from the major hardware and software vendors. After all, they will benefit directly from filling the available IT jobs as this will translate into increased demand for their products and services.

The solution to this problem hinges on the IT industry making the first move and showing some creativity and initiative and a willingness to re-invest some of its profits into providing training for the workers it needs. That's something other industries have been doing for decades.

Trends

Some interesting work/life initiatives are being implemented by companies including:

- Stress management programs that include bringing in a Chaplain once a week for workers to talk with.
- On-site career and personal counseling, therapeutic massages and acupuncture.
- Allowing workers to bring their pets to work.
- A cafeteria that bags gourmet meals for workers to take home.
- Intranet suggestion boxes that reward workers for innovative ideas.
- New Age office complexes where companies offer employees day care centres, elder care centres and on-site kennels. The employees can keep an eye on their families and pets from their desks via a computer screen.

Overall, stress-busting programs are proving to be a huge hit with workers and are in strong demand.

Other Developments

- Young entrepreneurs are on the increase. It seems that many of today's adolescents and Generation Xers, having seen their parents downsized, have developed a distrust of the conventional employer-employee contract and are setting up shop for themselves.

- Fewer gender specific jobs. As the manufacturing sector becomes increasingly computerized, more women will work in this historically male-dominated environment and conversely, more men will enter health care and business services, currently dominated by women.

- When you think about how hard people work in various countries around the world, you may think that Japan would top the list. According to statistics released by the International Labour Organization in 1999, however, Americans are now outworking the Japanese by 1,966 hours per year to 1,889. Going the other way, France enacted a 35-hour workweek.

- To optimize the time they spend commuting, more people are eating entire meals on the road, for which they buy specialized foods, cups and travelling bibs. Kellogg's is now concentrating on portable breakfast foods to capitalize on this trend. McDonald's now does most of its business via the drive-through rather than over the counter.

Lighten Up

Out of the Mouths of Babes

Mark Twain said that the most interesting information comes from children, for they tell all they know and stop. To whit:

- You can listen to thunder after lightning and tell how close you came to getting hit. If you don't hear it you got hit, so never mind.
- South America has cold summers and hot winters, but somehow they still manage.
- Genetics explain why you look like your father and if you don't why you should.
- Vacuums are nothings. We only mention them to let them know we know they're there.
- Some people can tell what time it is by looking at the sun. But I have never been able to make out the numbers.
- We say the cause of perfume disappearing is evaporation. Evaporation gets blamed for a lot of things people forgot to put the top on.
- I am not sure how clouds get formed. But the clouds know how to do it, and that is the important thing.
- Cyanide is so poisonous that one drop of it on a dog's tongue will kill the strongest man.
- The wind is like the air, only pushier.

Kids' Proverbs

- If you lie down with dogs, you'll stink in the morning.
- The pen is mightier than the pig.
- An idle mind is the best way to relax.
- If at first you don't succeed, get new batteries.

Resume Bloopers

These are taken from real resumes and cover letters.

- Reason for leaving last job: Maturity leave.
- Failed Bar Exam with relatively high grades.
- Received a plague for Salesperson of the Year.
- You will want me to be Head Honcho in no time.
- I was working for my Mom until she decided to move.

Want Ad

A Boston brokerage house advertised for a "Young Harvard graduate or the equivalent". Among the replies received was one from a Yale graduate who inquired, "By equivalent, do you mean two Princeton grads or a Yale grad part-time?"

Conclusion

The workplace at the beginning of the twenty-first century is going through some of the most fundamental changes in the past one hundred years. Some people are acutely aware of these changes while others are cruising along virtually untouched by them.

If you listen to some commentators, the job as we have known it for several generations is dead. That is an overstatement, but one nonetheless that thousands who have lost their jobs and are having a tough time replacing them with something similar or better, will quickly buy into it.

The fact is that most people, at this point in time, still make their living from a job just like their parents and grandparents did. In spite of the fact that the number of contract workers, self-employed people and small business owners is on the increase and downsizing, outsourcing and the use of technology continue to threaten jobs, we're still a society that is hooked on jobs.

You might think that after at least a decade of disappearing jobs that people would have adjusted to it by now. Nothing could be further from the truth. For most people, the experience of losing what they saw as a permanent job is terrifying and few of them are prepared to deal with it and find alternative employment.

Today's unemployment is not like the Depression of the 1930s even though losing your job now seems just as traumatic as it was then. As painful as it was in the '30s, those people were aware that many others were experiencing the same thing; neighbours, family members and co-workers. High unemployment was the status quo.

That's not the case today nor has it been for the past decade. People who lose their job today often feel victimized because prosperity seems to be all around us. "So what", you might say, "That's life" and you're right. That is life even if the majority who take that view probably have never experienced a job loss.

If you can rise above the dross of life and see the workplace from a broader, more philosophical point of view, you may conclude that while there is a lot of pain associated with the changes taking place, in the long run it may lead to a healthier lifestyle and a more fulfilling worklife for most people.

Some suggest that future generations will look back on our society's dependence on jobs as silly and naive. They may be right. On the other hand, future employers in large and small companies may look back on the period of downsizing and see it as ill-conceived, overdone and inconsistent with the needs of business and individuals. They may conclude that for a business to prosper in the long run, they need a stable, permanent workforce and that some people are not cut out for self-employment. They need the security and stability of a job just like their predecessors did in most of the twentieth century. Nobody knows how history will judge this period of transition that we're going through.

In the meantime, we have to adjust to those changes and get on with life. A good place to start is to ask yourself, "Did you seriously think that you were going to sail through your career with no major disruptions when that has rarely happened to previous generations?" A lot of people do think that way and that's why they have such a tough time dealing with the loss of a job.

You'll have to cope with the loss just like your ancestors did and remind yourself that they also had to deal with wars and the steady loss of life of their dear ones to diseases that have been eradicated for decades. By comparison, the challenges you have to face don't begin to add up to what they had to deal with. So try to get things in perspective. You're made of the same stuff as your ancestors and like them, you'll cope with lifes' challenges and move on.

How to Find Work in the 21st Century: A One-Day Seminar

Reviews

"Thanks for a great seminar."
Information Technology Manager
"Excellent, I recommend it."
Consultant/Project Manager
"Lots of good material. Gives you the format to follow to contracting."
Former small business owner
"Very helpful. A hands-on and practical approach. Group interaction was excellent."
Operations Director
"Valuable for both people looking at independent consulting and those seeking full-time employment."
Human Resources Consultant.

Who Should Attend

Experienced people who have decided that they want to be self-employed, permanently or temporarily, and who are confident that they have a set of skills that are marketable but at the same time need help to successfully market themselves. Those who are looking for a job will also benefit from the seminar. Participants should have a basic level of computer literacy and an e-mail address.

Content

The key topics in the book will be covered but the format is hands-on and practical and the primary focus will be on how to market yourself. Each participant, working with other people in the group, will create a cover letter, twenty-first century resume, marketing letter and a brochure that highlights their marketable skills and is directed at the needs of the market they are targeting.

The seminar is designed to show the group how to network with one another to exchange work-search tips, success stories, leads on employment opportunities and communication on workplace issues and trends that are relevant to the group. The intent is to set up a network that supports and enhances the work-search efforts of each participant well beyond the seminar.

Seminar Fee

The cost is $295 CDN, which includes refreshments, lunch and seminar material.

Dates and Locations

The seminar can be offered anywhere and will be offered based on demand. The group size is limited to twenty people. It should appeal to the members of alumni associations, chambers of commerce, professional and trade associations and requests to run it from such groups will be welcomed. Any individual or group who is interested in having it offered in their area should contact Ron McGowan at:

efr@telus.net

Feedback

How to Find Work in the 21st Century is a work-in-progress and the intention is to continually update and improve it. Any suggestions you have to improve it will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

In particular, if you are aware of any web sites, books or articles that are related to the main areas covered in the book that you feel would be of interest and benefit to future readers, please feel free to pass them on. Also, if you feel that there are important areas that are not currently covered in the book and should be, let us know about those too.

Any suggestions should be submitted to:

efr@telus.net

About the Author

Ron McGowan has operated *Executives For Rent*, a consulting company in Vancouver, British Columbia, for the past six years. He places contract workers into a wide range of industries. His clients range from one of British Columbia's biggest employers to a company with less than ten employees.

He spent half of his career in sales and marketing positions with several major computer and telecommunications companies. The other half was spent teaching Information Technology subjects at three colleges in British Columbia.

Ron's company has been profiled in the *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *Business in Vancouver*, *BC Business*, *The Montreal Gazette*, on several Vancouver radio stations and on national television on the CBC program "50 Up".

He has successfully made the transition from a corporate career into self-employment and has experienced downsizing twice in his career. He regularly offers a one-day seminar called *How to Find Work in the 21st Century*. He lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

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How to Find Work in the 21st Century

Contracting Your Way to a Job or a Career

Ron McGowan

In this forward-looking book, find out what you have to do to succeed in the 21st Century

What you will learn

How the workplace has changed.

Before you can succeed in today's workplace you have to understand how it works. It's not the same place that your parents or grandparents worked in and your approach to being successful in it will have to be different from theirs.

Defining what you have to offer.

This phase is critical if you want to succeed in the workplace of the 21st century but unfortunately it is one of the most neglected areas in defining effective career strategies. That's because it's not easy and it may be uncomfortable for you but it's the foundation on which every other aspect of being successful in today's workplace is built on.

How to market yourself.

You know more about selling than you think you do and most people have false notions about how to successfully sell themselves. Many people are uncomfortable with this area and there are reasons for that which will be explored. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how effective you can be at selling yourself once you understand how the process works. Learn how to construct a ***21st century resume*** that will get the attention of employers.

Getting Started. The First 90 Days.

Here you will be given a road map for getting you up and running as a contractor and some strategies for increasing your chances of finding work. That road map will increase your effectiveness in finding work and reduce the frustration level that comes from an unfocussed approach.

Ron McGowan has operated ***Executives For Rent***, WWW.EFRCANADA.COM, a consulting company in Vancouver, British Columbia, for the past six years. He places contract workers into a wide range of industries. His clients range from some of British Columbia's biggest employers to a company with less than ten employees. He has successfully made the transition from a corporate career into self-employment. Prior to his corporate career, he taught Information Technology subjects at three colleges.

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